

“A (Once) Quiet Corner in Her Mind”

By Bree Sheppard

When she was five
 there was a little village in her head
And she named it “Happy”
 because that's how she felt inside
And the Baker was always up by 7 o'clock
 and iced red velvet cakes
And the Policeman wore a shiny badge
 and waved in the parades
And the Farmer had a herd of sheep
 and a flock of chickens, too
And the Librarian polished the shelves once a week
 and read aloud picture books
And the Fireman volunteered for the community
 and smelled like woodsmoke
And the people were friendly
And the streets were quiet
And the girl felt joyous.

When she was ten
 there was a growing town in her head
And she named it “Okay”
 because that's how she felt inside
And the Baker slept in till 10 o'clock
 and burned a few batches of cookies
And the Policeman wore a blue uniform with a gun
 and let the school children cross the street
And the Farmer had a petting zoo
 and made lots of money
And the Librarian left dust on the shelves
 and read cooking magazines
And the Fireman got another job
 and smelled like cigarettes
And the people keep to themselves
And the streets were busy at rush-hour
And the girl felt different.

When she was fifteen
 there was a large city in her head
And she named it “Crazy”
 because that's how she felt inside
And the Baker stayed up till 1 am
 and was out of breath all the time
And the Policeman wore a coffee-stained shirt

and parked outside the high school
And the Farmer sold his land
 and watched it get bulldozed
And the Librarian left crumbs on the desk
 and read 800 page books
And the Fireman got laid off
 and smelled like beer
And the people became Bad or Good
And the streets were polluted with graffiti
And the girl felt stressed.

When she was twenty
 there was an enormous country in her head
And she named it "Nothing"
 because that's how she felt inside
And the Baker died of a heart attack
 and had a small funeral
And Policeman became divorced
 and retired shortly after
And the Farmer moved to somewhere far away
 and never came back
And the Librarian left old lottery tickets on the floor
 and read online conspiracy theories
And the Fireman lived in a cardboard box
 and smelled like dirty drugs
And the people fought wars
And the streets were destroyed by bombs
And the girl lost her mind.