

*I dream of home ownership and a backyard full of wild flowers*

Somewhere, I wear a yellow sweater and smell of sandalwood.  
Somewhere, my aloe plant pushes into new pots, each bigger than the last.  
Somewhere, I roast my own almonds and make trail mix for my mother on weekends,  
to eat between her dog walks and meetings.  
I do not want a car more so than in winter. When the wind chill whips through my pants  
and I am not in charge of the heating in my apartment.  
I do not need to have the kind of money that owns the houses on Summit Avenue,  
the longest stretch of Victorian architecture in the country, I only need the kind of money  
that can always buy dinner for my friends, or bring a fresh baguette  
to my partner. Somewhere, I am grown in the way that I have benefits  
like dental insurance, and a car that can carry a Christmas tree.  
Sometimes, when I am white knuckling  
my way through rent, I have never felt so young.  
My anxiety is meaty with uncertainty, like somewhere a dog has hold of the screen door  
and no one quite knows if it will come off the hinges.  
When I think of owning a home, I dream  
of a bank account  
intact enough to replace the front window when it cracks.  
To maybe, not all the time, but every so often, buy an organic mango for my lover, to bring it  
home in a paper bag,  
past the front door painted yellow and the vase of fresh flowers,  
to cut it up in a kitchen big enough to cook in, but small enough we must brush up  
against each other when we do, to walk it out to a backyard, fenced in for a dog  
or two, where my lover waits, a book on their lap, the sun on their face, and then, blessedly  
this fruit in their hands.

This poem was one of the first I brought to workshop this semester, and thus one of the first poems I knew I'd be including in my chapbook. Its original form actually came from a prompt and writing exercise in MacSlams workshop (every Tuesday from 4:45-6:00 pm in the Sounds of Blackness Lounge!) that involved a word pool of words we had to use. I was a bit surprised at the form this piece took, but not by its focus. Money is often on my mind, as I'm at Macalester with the help of a lot of scholarships and loans, but it can be difficult for me to write about financial anxiety in poems. It's not a subject I come across very often in the genre, especially in academia. This poem works through some of those fears, but also reaches for the comfort and stability that I hope for, things like plants and good food for my loved ones. This balance of the sad and fearful alongside the tender and hopeful is extremely important to my capstone. Through the poems in the chapbook I'm trying to take complex emotions and make them legible and poignant to readers. Many thanks to Professor Michael Prior and my capstone classmates for working through this piece with me and helping it find its home in my final chapbook.