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Under the Willow

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Under the Willow

Under the willow
we sat as children
shaded from the sun-
built castles of dirt and red clay
crushing them with bare feet.
We snuck kisses
behind grown backs.
While they prayed for their sick
And forgot their rosaries.
Under the willow
we fought wars
with plastic soldiers.
Ice cream dripped down thin hands.
Ants gathered-
we killed them with sticky fingers.
Cheek turned to beard.
Chests became breasts,
fingers grew thick and calloused.
They pulled triggers.
Men gathered.
We killed them with bloody fingers.
We returned to
the willow.
We sipped on sap.
Intoxicating.

We pulled her branches apart,
used them to build lives.
We stare out of windows,
watching our children play.
Without her shade,
Splintered and dying,
We can't sit
under the willow
no place for our sick
or our rosaries.

-Jack Paal
St. John's University '17