When You Live on a summer’s eve at 436 Pier Avenue

When you live in a hundred-year-old house, knobs grow loose and windows become stubborn.

You greet the plumber by his first name and puzzle over the back steps splitting open like hot buttered lobster rolls.

When you live in a hundred-year-old house, you speak to ghosts.

They take you by the hand and point in their sfumato way toward a secret drug stash or the corner where the twin suicides unfolded.

You breathe their exhales and hear their hopes.

When you live in a hundred-year-old house, you cherish the cast iron floor register and its inconsistent heat.

You imagine walking under the same ceiling-plaster relief work as your 1920s doppelgänger who carried fresh flowers and citrus striding in her Nile-green day dress.

She becomes your confidante.

When you live in a hundred-year-old house, your father-in-law takes every opportunity to criticize its insufficient square footage.

You find yourself giddy that one bathroom is a beyond blessing and apologetic that a trail of toys clutters the neighbor’s view.

When you live in this old house, you know it (and your marriage) won’t last.

You know eventually a developer will make an offer the owners can’t refuse.

You lose.