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Beth and Bridget's Patterson House

By Lindsay Martin

Patterson Street is now long overgrown tenement housing, amidst the part of Akron where the mayor's tribe has not yet rebuilt, not even thought about. The area now belongs to one of the worst public school locations, crime, and empty businesses. Yet, it used to be a beautiful neighborhood, filled with full families and nice cars, fresh paint and updated landscapes.

1949

5566 Patterson was once home to Russian immigrants, descendants of czars, and down the street there were Catholic families, and teachers. It was the time of the World War II and the Goodyear Blimp, and a couple with a daughter named Kathy playing house with the name Popovich.

1969

Kathy got picked up at a bar by two policemen for attacking a man behind the counter. Unstable, pitiful. Always in the county jail for something. She had two daughters in the jail cell while the female officer held her hand and the doctor took the children away. She saw them for two days, then was released. She collected most of her things and left without the babies, tired already of being their mother, carrying them for too long. So, the Russian immigrants named Popovich cleaned up the upstairs bedroom, picked up their granddaughters and took them home to Patterson.

1973

The granddaughters played with immigrant's children. They went down to the corner store for cherry cola, skipping down Patterson, saying hello to the children in each lawn. Every year, marking their height and their growth inside of the walls of the home, roaming front yards and the park down the street, attending mass in green hats and white gloves, tiny old fashioned, but loved and raised by an aging grandmother. They became taller, grown up. Beth and Bridget roamed Firestone High School, riding the waves, ruling, until they dreamt of other places.

1985

They took a train across the nation. Or a couple trains, a few buses. They packed their bags, had a few picked locations. Wanted to meet their dad in Santa Barbara. They traveled lightly, they left the records at Patterson, but followed the Pretenders, pretending. Drinking in what their petite frames could possibly ever thirst for, a night life, a life of noise. Meeting The Minutemen, dancing on a tour bus, with smiles, cigarettes, Robert Smith (but he was very prestigious, didn't like fun girls). The Smiths album morphed into the back of the stage, where the lyrics were louder, more beautiful. Staying, holding back until the dawn rose over the hills, unlike an eastern sunrise, then falling asleep until the western sun tipped into the Pacific. Bridget dated Joey Ramone before she decided, "He was so nice, but so awkward." Beth and Bridget danced, dabbled. Finding out how to exist without limits, rules, crafting networks to live and wander. Friends, lovely nights, ways to exist with little cash, crashing, thriving.

Black polyester, red and green plaid. Bleached hair, Doc Martens. The concept of unequal earrings dangling, piecing together, the route of a rock star—but the star always pointedly fixated. And the stars always higher than God granted. White dust chalked among black sweaters, heathens, smoked feathers. Black and white like The Germs' first record.

1988

Patterson was dying like the neighborhood that surrounded it. Bridget and Beth were dropped off at the empty house in a dark purple van on its way to New York City. It was quiet. And the house was worn down. Sad. Beth was tired. Someone had squatted for a while, but only to have shelter, nothing stolen. Lost and lonely shoes, hats, coats of their grandparents, the name Popovich only left for the later generation.

Slowly, their cousins and friends crept in from the past, rising, like embers finding new heat, fresh paper.

They were from the nostalgic main street back into the picture.

The embers cradling dust, pleading for companionship.

They tasted Akron's finest it had to offer, but it was too expensive. Not like California. It was gray and harsh, heavy. Like the Midwestern weather sitting on top of Patterson.

It wasn't the normal hook, the normal rock of the star. But they weren't born stars. They were born in a cell, with four walls of gray. They tasted what they could afford, and liked it. Jumped up, train to the liquor store down the street, right by where the Catholics were replaced by AA, and the school nearby became a clinic for users to donate their blood plasma in exchange for twenty dollars a week.

Race, roll, put down, rest. Race, roll, put down, and rest. Shriveled up, crunch, taste. Feel. Seeing gray spots, feeling ticking, constant ticking. Speeding up to the stop sign. It's like California on a very old dusty couch, in a falling down house on Patterson. It's a reason to stay put. When the California memory fades, they realize Ohio sinks deeper. Feels deeper. Cracked teeth, pocked face, dried skin. Putting their records in the attic because now the world would rather play music on a silver disc.

1991

1991 was the year Beth got pregnant. She had a baby girl, Kailyn Mae, and Bridget had a boy named Anderson soon after. There was crying in Patterson, so Ronnie, the father of Anderson, put a swing set in the old backyard. Beth grew cucumbers and cleaned up another room to put the junk in. And their friends all had babies. Babies were just another way to figure out something to do. Or babies made time schedules. Or they didn't want the babies, but had them. Either way, the babies came. And the babies played on the rug in Patterson's living room, threw up and cried and pooped in the house, and needed anything and everything. The twins babysat their niece and nephew and kept the basement door locked. And everything grew.

Patterson died the day the police showed up, banging on the door, yelling. The children were upstairs taking a nap. They must have found out that the side door was a place of enemies, a harbor. Rocks of past rock stars resurfaced. Sink or swim, but the little children, and California was nothing they could handle anymore. Ronnie saved what could be salvaged and they moved. Not much was salvaged, and the basement was filled with concrete.

They left Patterson in the hands of the Section-8 housing department, who moved a dying woman into the falling down house. You can still drive past it, although the house now looks entirely different from when the Goodyear Company filled the neighborhood.

1996

I asked my mother how she met Aunt Bridget, and she says at a concert in Miami. I asked her what Aunt Bridget and Aunt Beth did, she said they were groupies, and then cocktail waitresses. I asked what a groupie was. I asked what a cocktail was. She said they were fun girls, and she was a fun girl. And they had a lot of fun for a while. But they wanted to be mommies, they wanted little girls. They got two little girls, two little boys, and had more fun than they ever thought they would. I asked if they still had fun. She said yes, unfortunately.