



## JXN Isabella Suell

Where I come from Mama's friends greet you with a "Hay Baby!", so loud your ears ring and you smile in response even though you're half grown and definitely no baby.

My home is sand filled craters in the ground; shopping centers with a wingstop, two hair & nail salons, and a laundromat. There's what used to be Fred's, with the obnoxious blue letters with the garish green outline but is now a profitless void.

Growing up was cursing the metal playground that blistered your skin upon contact, then praying for the rusted junk back when it's replaced with a singular red slide. One slide for a whole school to share between itself...that slide was the ugliest shade of red you ever remember seeing.

Living was walking to the store with your friends for cheap snacks. Feeling fifty types of grown when your ma lets you ride your bike down to the gas station with a dollar gripped in your sweaty hand. Ignoring the dogs barking day and night and at you. House and body and soul buzzing from a bass bumped so high in the car tearing down the street and you wonder if the whole block vibrated with you. It's trying to guess if that POP down the street was a firework or a bullet ripping out of a metal barrel.

It was "eat fast or not at all", your mouth smoking cause you po'boiled peanut in fresh from the bubbling water on the stove. You never the burnt taste buds because you moan when the shell breaks apart and seasoned juice fills your mouth. Gumbo and crawfish étouffée always in need of more pepper or salt or Tony Chachere's Creole Seasoning.

I'm from broken desks chairs that pitch your thigh as you flip through the outdated, deteriorating textbook in front of you. Yearning for the dusted lockers that line the hall, with their complementary art works of "Jasmine was here" and "Jasmine's a hoe". The smell of coco butter overwhelming your senses, burning your nostrils on each inhale. Teachers from Detroit and the deep country who tell you the truth cause no one gets anywhere in life being ignorant.

I'm from broken building that broken people are trying their damndest to live in. Roads and sidewalks and parking lots that have cracked under the pressure of this life. Flinching at police sirens and watching through the blinds as screaming matches take place from the front door of the house across the street. Filling up the back of the toilet so you can flush cause the water had to be turned off for right now. Giving neighbors what you can because we're all the struggle and ain't no one got the business to struggle more than they have to.

I'm from "trying to find funding" and free lunches and metal detectors at every door. School clubs that have a GoFundMe cause the school is one strike away from being bulldozed. Home-cooked meals delivered to your door because the neighbor had a BBQ and doesn't believe in throwing good food away. Being friendly to everyone even when you don't like them because "My mama raised me right", and ready to knock out anyone who says a word against said mama.

I'm from the fixer-upper ghetto fabulous state of no head start, damn good comfort food, and a hospitality you can't get from anywhere outside of Jackson, Mississippi.