

Mackenzie Roberts

Mvskoke Youth Arts Festival Submission

March 31st, 2022

The Land Walks with Me Too

The land clings to my spirit like smoke on my clothes.
Mahogany fingers burrow deep into my heart and grip me,
in a way that makes me feel wanted somehow.
No shame or regret or guilt rests in this hold.
It is understanding.

And restless.

And clingy.

Reminding me that I can never weed out my roots.
The land whispers to take her along,

so I do.

I listen intensely,

feel her beckon me with her grace and finally,

I am recognized.

I carry my people with me in my back pack.

The red kids that people deemed unworthy,

The red kids that are smart like beaded necklaces on spring picture day,
quick witted like quips of curse words at the goals with no nets.

Red kids that bleed the same blood as me.

I take them with me to office hours.

Paying homage to their open arms with the resolution to show that kids like me are just as
good,

as any rich kid in a city school with internet.

People can say that I don't belong.

Look me up and down with narrowed eyes,

ignoring my high cheek bones or the resentment in my gaze.

They say my ivory skin is a minus one to ceremony.

That the blisters on my knuckles from fry bread grease don't give me the right to wear
my grandmothers turquoise.

Oh, but the land knows me *well*.

she remembers my scholarship under the pecan tree,

The chattahoga I ate at my grandmother's funeral,

The way Mvskoke is a secret language between me and my grandfather.

The land beckons me to keep her with me.

Not tucked into my pocket,

but out in open where anyone who questions me will know.

You

have

no

power

here.