

Two trees.

Two trees come with two pasts.

Two trees come with two pasts. Different.

Two trees come with two pasts. Different and separate.

Two trees come with two pasts. Different, separate, similar.

*Cornus florida*, *Magnolia grandiflora*. Flowering dogwood, southern magnolia.

Rivers of astounding yet terrifying histories run deep within their rings. "Did you know— did you know, child— the lighter rights are grown in the warmth and bright of spring! The darker in the cold dim of winter. One light and one dark— one light and one dark, child— that's a year for the tree. And they live much longer than you and I will." These trees have seen the past and know exactly what to make of it. These trees are the voice of the future. These trees know yesterday, today, and tomorrow, and chance not the slightest wave of doubt, of fear, of any emotion, really, that can be assigned a human connotation or emphasize some connection to humanity.

Because they are trees. Because they are not human. Because they are stronger than us.

Three young women observe the broken spaces where their beloveds used to reign.

The big, dark magnolia tree in the urban Charlotte backyard. The petite and friendly dogwood on the left side of that wooden ramp leading up to Papaw's covered patio. Must you leave your leaf-shaped stamp on childish hearts? We've already lost so much.

Two trees, both doing their jobs so well. Protectors, allies, friends.

Two trees, both doing their jobs so well. Protectors and allies.

Two trees both doing their jobs so well. Protectors.

Two trees, both doing their jobs so well.

I miss the backyard

southern magnolia

that protected us

so well, that loved

us so deeply, and

that taught us what

it meant to be kind,

gentle, and strong.

And I miss that

flowering dogwood

beside Papaw's ramp

that taught us the

beauty of a simplistic

grace and curious, quick wit.

I also miss my home, my family, my childhood. I miss being young. I wish my dream wasn't to grow up. I wish I hadn't done this so fast. I hope I did an okay job. I hope I'm an okay person.

I can't believe that I lived longer than the trees.