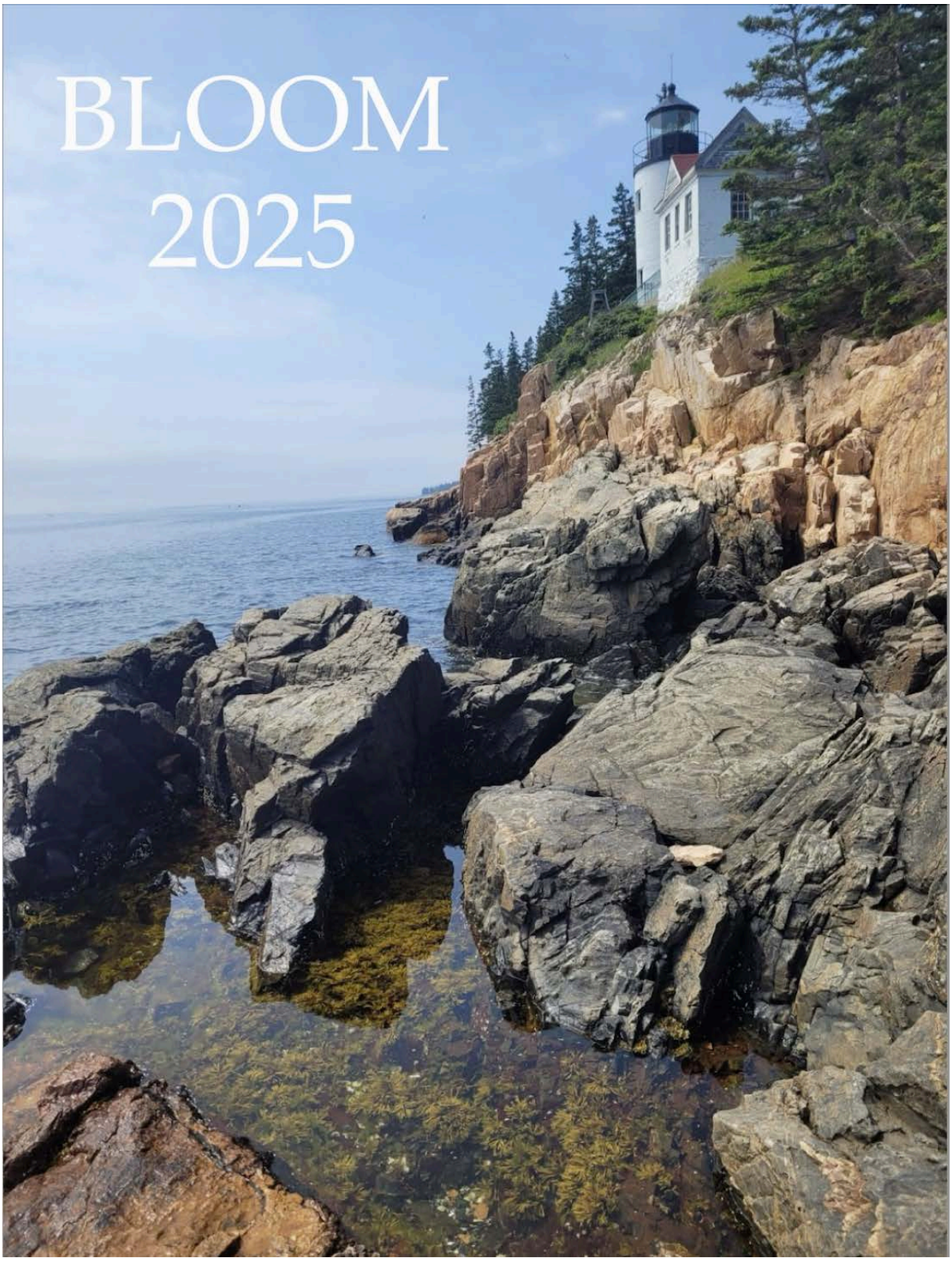

BLOOM
2025

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Emmarly Larocca

yearning for a long lost place

To the times I felt weightless
Feeling a rough coiling embrace
Sitting on top of a mountain range
Reaching to the highest shelf
To the brightest star
Warmth filling veins
Love filling hearts
Trembling hands
Rough calloused fingers
Why is your thumb smaller than mine?
Sun roasted olives
Flea markets after falling asleep in a movie theater
Burning optical embers
Undeniable laughter
This is what home felt like
This is what my place was
Maybe I'll find it again
At the X on a treasure map
Maybe I'll find you there
I can't help but to look for you
In the streets amongst strangers
I mistook you for the lamppost by my window in a half-eyed daze once

You walk besides me in the blaring city lights- I see you when it flickers
You flow within the breeze of a peaceful countryside
One I could only ever dream of
-that makes my hair knot into itself
You are everywhere and nowhere at the same time

To be held is to feel loved
To be held high is to be young
To be held by you is to be home
I am lost
My feet are planted on the ground
And I found my first grey hair

I want to go home.

Adam Sarlan

The Wishing Trees



Tom Waskiewicz

Roots of Wisdom: How Small Farms Preserve Their Way of Life in W. Massachusetts

Small family farms are more than businesses; they are a way of life, shaped by generations of experience, sacrifice, and resilience. Every field plowed, every seed planted, every harvest gathered carries with it the wisdom of those who came before. But there's no handbook for passing down this knowledge. Instead, it happens in the quiet moments—side by side in the fields, in conversations at the kitchen table, in the habits formed over years of hard work.

For many farmers, teaching the next generation isn't a formal process. It happens through long days spent together, where lessons unfold naturally. Fixing a tractor isn't just about turning a wrench; it's about understanding the rhythm of the machine, sensing when something isn't right. Rotating crops isn't just a strategy; it's an instinct honed over time. Farming is learned not in classrooms but in the dirt, under the sun, through failures and triumphs.

Family is at the heart of this transfer of knowledge, but it's also where the biggest challenges arise. A farm is more than land—it's memories, sacrifices, and dreams tied together by generations. Trust, respect, and shared vision make it possible for knowledge to pass smoothly. But when opinions clash or expectations aren't met, tensions can grow. The older generation may struggle with letting go, while the younger one wrestles with the weight of responsibility. Some families navigate these transitions with open conversations, while others let misunderstandings and unspoken frustrations create barriers.

Communication, as in any relationship, is key. Some farmers have learned the hard way that assumptions can lead to conflict. Open discussions about responsibilities, expectations, and long-term plans make all the difference. When the older generation listens and guides with patience, and the younger generation approaches learning with respect, the farm has a better chance of surviving the transition.

Tradition is deeply valued, yet change is inevitable. Many farmers still rely on memory and hands-on experience to run their operations, but those who embrace record-keeping and digital tools often find them helpful in training the next generation. Resistance to new methods is common, but for those willing to integrate technology while still honoring time-tested practices, the future becomes more manageable.

Passing down farm knowledge is about more than skills—it's about relationships, trust, and shared purpose. Those who take the time to mentor, to document their methods, and to plan ahead give their farms the best chance of survival. Waiting until retirement to think about succession can be a costly mistake. The farms that thrive through generations are the ones where knowledge is treated as a living legacy, cultivated with care, patience, and intention.

Farming is not just about growing crops; it's about growing a future. The lessons learned from those who have already faced these challenges serve as a guiding light for those who will take up the work. The hope is that, through careful planning, open communication, and a willingness to balance tradition with change, small family farms will continue to thrive for generations to come.

Adam Sarlan

Big John Refuses to Play Nice

and I know that I should scold him
for biting a horses' ear,
but I told the stablehand before that
he doesn't like to share his water
and likes to be left alone
because he embraces his solitude
like an old philosopher'
and what he thinks about
God only knows but I know
that this world was cruel to him too
and just as I sit alone by the pond
my horse likes to stand at the trough
by himself in the sunlight without
fear of the whip or pain from a branding iron
and people tell me all the time
how I should collar him punish him
but acting out of fear and worry
is no way to live a wild, glorious life.

Joshua Barron

An Ode to Chicopee

A city on Twin Rivers, once a part of something bigger
But then it carved its own path, it became a mill town like the many in New England
But this one is special, it's mine
The city I was raised in, the city I grew up in
The city I became myself in
My history and the city’s are inexplicably linked
I too hope to carve my own path in this wild world
I too hope to create something special from something so mundane
These thoughts swirl around in my mind as I sit on the bank of one of these rivers
a fishing rod in hand and a hill on my back
I'm not sure why I have the rod in this moment
I didn't bait the hook and I don't expect to catch anything
But I feel like I gotta be doing something
I can't just laze about and just watch the river run, can I?
As I debate what is and isn't a waste of time a breeze rises from the river, climbing up the hill
It brushes against my face like a gentle caress
I close my eyes and all doubts leave me
I reel in the line and put the rod aside
My hands fall behind me, my fingers splayed out amongst the grass
Serenity finds me in this dime a dozen mill town

Joshua Barron

Watching the River Run



Ismael Maranon

Split Brain

where do I confide? |
mind
you. I'd like to try |
and decide; keep in' |
mind
secrets make(s) me lie. |
be awake—days I |
mind
just go on to find |
something inside my |
mind
self…less? I cry. |

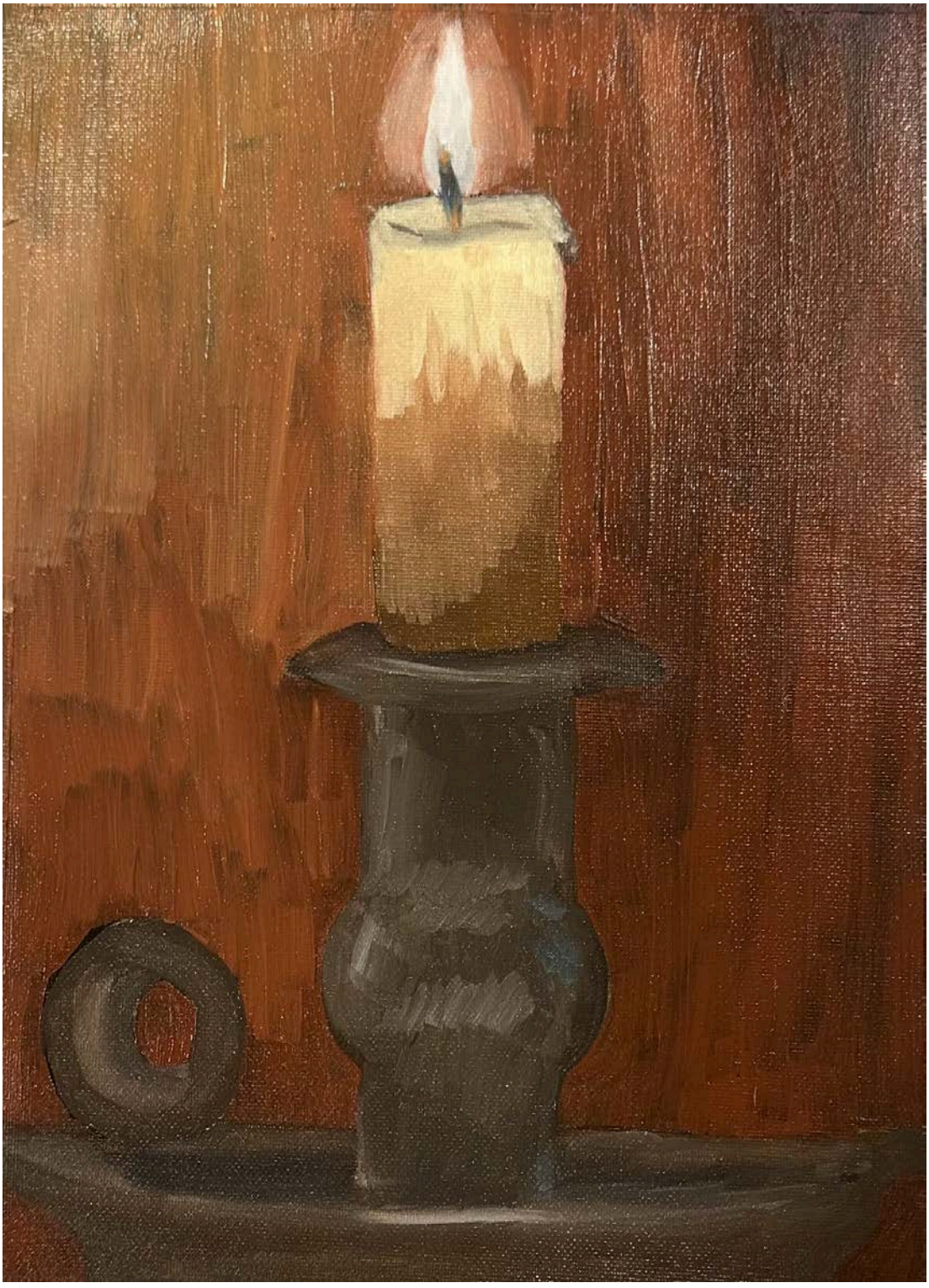
Ryann Anderson

Didst thou consider that which may never be?

Inconsequentiality that comes with the manmade the pariah of purposeful purposelessness bounded predetermination shuttered instantly by the cosmos configuration of gods bornt flesh and witness to divinity's fragility in blinding light as I see the brewing storm of could have beens rising a tidal wave of triumphant connection in the overgrown path and bursting fireworks until the gunpowder once brilliant sizzles away into smoke and shatters glass strewn across the floor they let go with shitty goodbyes and hopelessness so dire my inconsequence has consequence in Totodile form and I wonder in this fleeting rain the true price of love

Sav Switzer

Candlelight



Stephanie Afonso

Pick-pocket

when you asked me, “what do poets do for fun, besides self-loathing?”

all i could say was, “we like ice cream.”

i lied.

there’s beauty in the ocean, and the sunset,

and the lumin between the leaves on a summer afternoon with

literally

no breeze.

and you laughed.

“there’s something hiding in your eyes.” you said.

there was no more wine.

“Shakespeare was right for killing those teens.”

“What a dream.” you sighed, “He should have killed me too.”

Stephanie Afonso

prunes & regret

you’re going to hell in a handbag–

and i’ll put you there myself.

Ismael Maranon

Funeral

My epitaph.

Whenever that

Grab of death

Takes my last breath

It should ask

“If he flew like colors but fell like a glass
Did he pass?”

Why? It’s as a fool I should be remembered:

“Of course he passed—he’s been dismembered!”

Antoannet Estevez

The Guilt of the Healer



Ibrahim Ayouba Mahamane

The Lying Ring

I have a ring. A simple band of metal that I never take off. It clings to my finger like a parasite, a weight none other can see, but I feel it growing heavier with every lie, every betrayal, every time I let someone love me just to watch them rot from the inside out.

She was different.

Or so I told myself.

A loving, radiant woman who traced my skin like scripture, as if she could rewrite what had already been carved into me.

Never trust.

That was written on my forehead, clear as day, yet she ignored it. Maybe she thought she could be the exception. Maybe she believed I could change.

She gave me everything, loyalty, time, and devotion. I let it wash over me, let myself bathe in the warmth of it, knowing full well that I would leave her in the cold when I'd had enough.

And just like before, like always, I felt it creeping in, that *fucking* feeling.

The one that gnaws at me.

The one that turns my stomach and hollows out my chest.

The one I don't even fight anymore.

I just sit back and let it happen.

So, I watched her suffer.

I watched as the light in her eyes dimmed, as the laughter turned to silence, as the warmth of her touch turned hesitant.

I watched the way she tried to hold on, the way she searched for the man she thought I was, the way she whispered my name like a prayer.

As if that would keep me from becoming the monster she was starting to see.

I've seen it before.

Over and over.

Different faces, same story.

They care for me, and I ruin them.

Not because I want to.

But because it's what I do.

Because it's what I *am*.

And when she finally left, I wasn't mad at her.

No.

I was mad because she didn't give me the chance to break her completely.

See, that's the part that gets me.

The others? They stayed too long. They let me unravel them thread by thread, let me poison them so thoroughly that even after they walked away, they carried pieces of me inside them.

Pieces that would never heal right.

But *she*?

She cut me off before I could finish the job.

And *that*, that is what keeps me up at night.

I keep the ring on as a reminder.

Of what I've done.

Of what I *am*.

Of the destruction I leave in my wake, the wreckage of people who were unfortunate enough to care for me.

And every time I look at it, I swear it gets heavier.

Pulling me down.

Branding my sins into my skin.

And making the words on my forehead shine brighter, for the next hopeful to notice.

Ryann Anderson

Totodile Blues

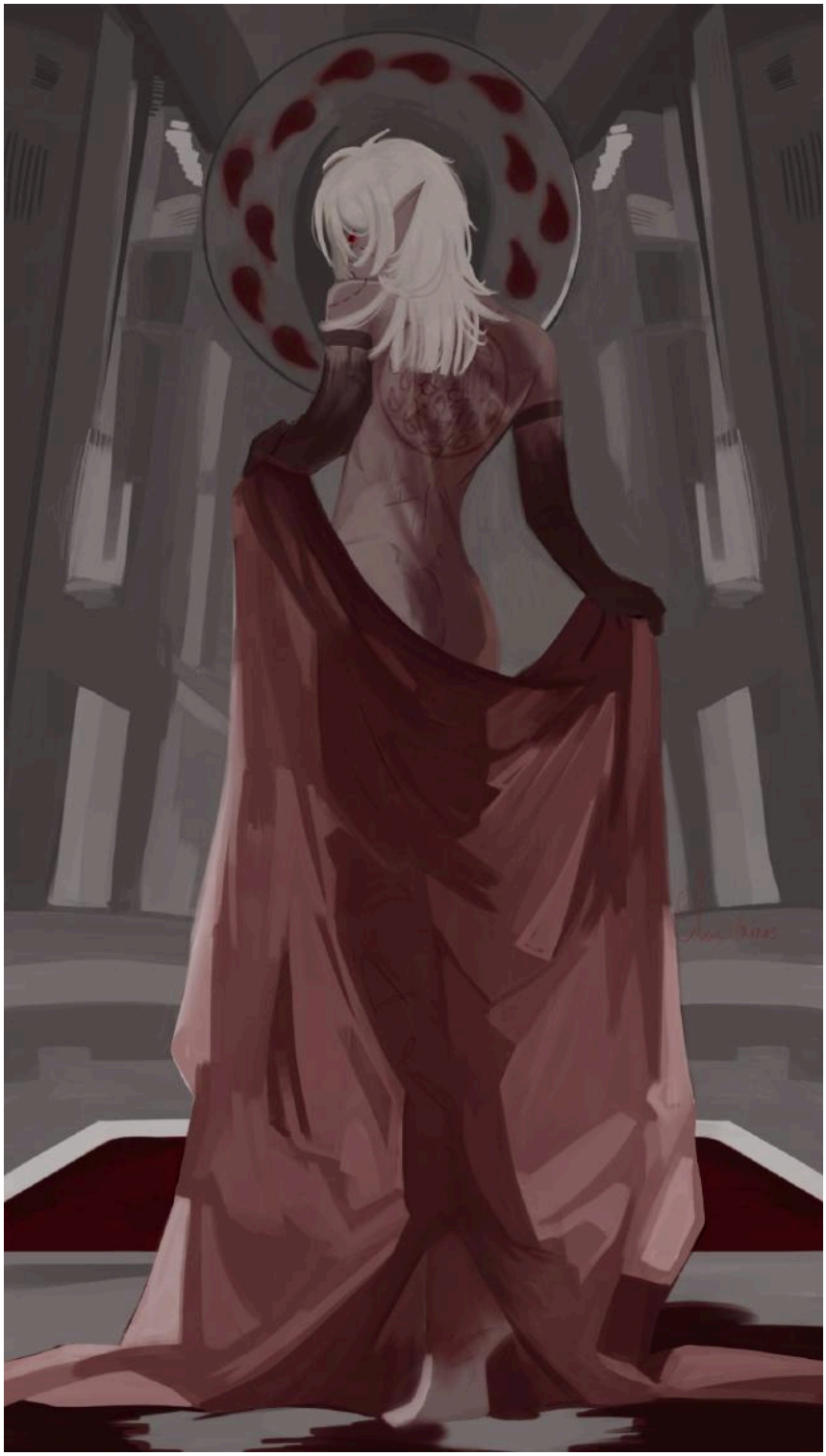
White noise.

Separated; shrouded:

we are used.

Antoannet Estevez

The Throne of Blood



Ibrahim Ayouba Mahamane

The Thing That Wears Their Body

A good lie is built on truth.
It must be simple. Believable.
Just enough to hold together,
just enough to make them trust.

And so, it was.

A laugh timed perfectly.
A nod at the right moment.
A carefully chosen word, a well-placed silence,
a reflection of everything they wanted to see.

That's how it always started.
That's how it always worked.
The illusion carefully crafted,
sewn into every glance,
every step,
every breath.

Because the moment a single crack forms,
the whole thing crumbles.

And that was never an option.

So, the voice adjusted.
The opinions softened.
The edges smoothed over
until there was nothing sharp left to cut through the act.

That's how the illusion stayed alive,
letting them see what they wanted to see,
letting them believe there was something real beneath it all.

But what if there wasn't?

What if the face in the mirror
was nothing more than fragments,

held together by borrowed laughter and rehearsed responses?

What if the act went on for so long
that the person underneath simply faded?

The worst part isn't the deception.

It's the weight of it.

The lies don't just hurt them.
They hurt the one who tells them, I can see it, digging deeper, hollowing out the spaces where something real used to be.

Because a lie, told often enough,
stops being a lie.

It becomes real.

And slowly,
there is nothing left of the person who told it,
only the lie that remains.

Ryann Anderson

If you believe me: the Night Before

I've disillusioned myself too much to love what I thought I could have loved had I given myself the permission.

But there lacks at the golden gates the permissible boundary between.

Have me to note these down on limestone: *The Great List of Confidence Sharing*

And tell me of the time where everything went right for once in hopes I give a —

This void sits in my chest singing the hymn

I feel nothing to that nature I spoke fondly of.

Whatever chain exists spills flesh and sinew.

I don't love. I can't love.

The worth isn't there. I've no feeling.

A loss of words,

a spray-less fountain frothing in liquid fungal spores like

lesions across my skin as ergotism took Jesus of the Cross into a steaming pile of —.

Coos fall from red at the want to trim and water and feed the garden of a thing I once longed for.

How to exist in a world that turns away humanity seeking to survive in its unfairness?

We fight? We take it?

Direction existed for lesser things.

Ozymandias does not hear you now.

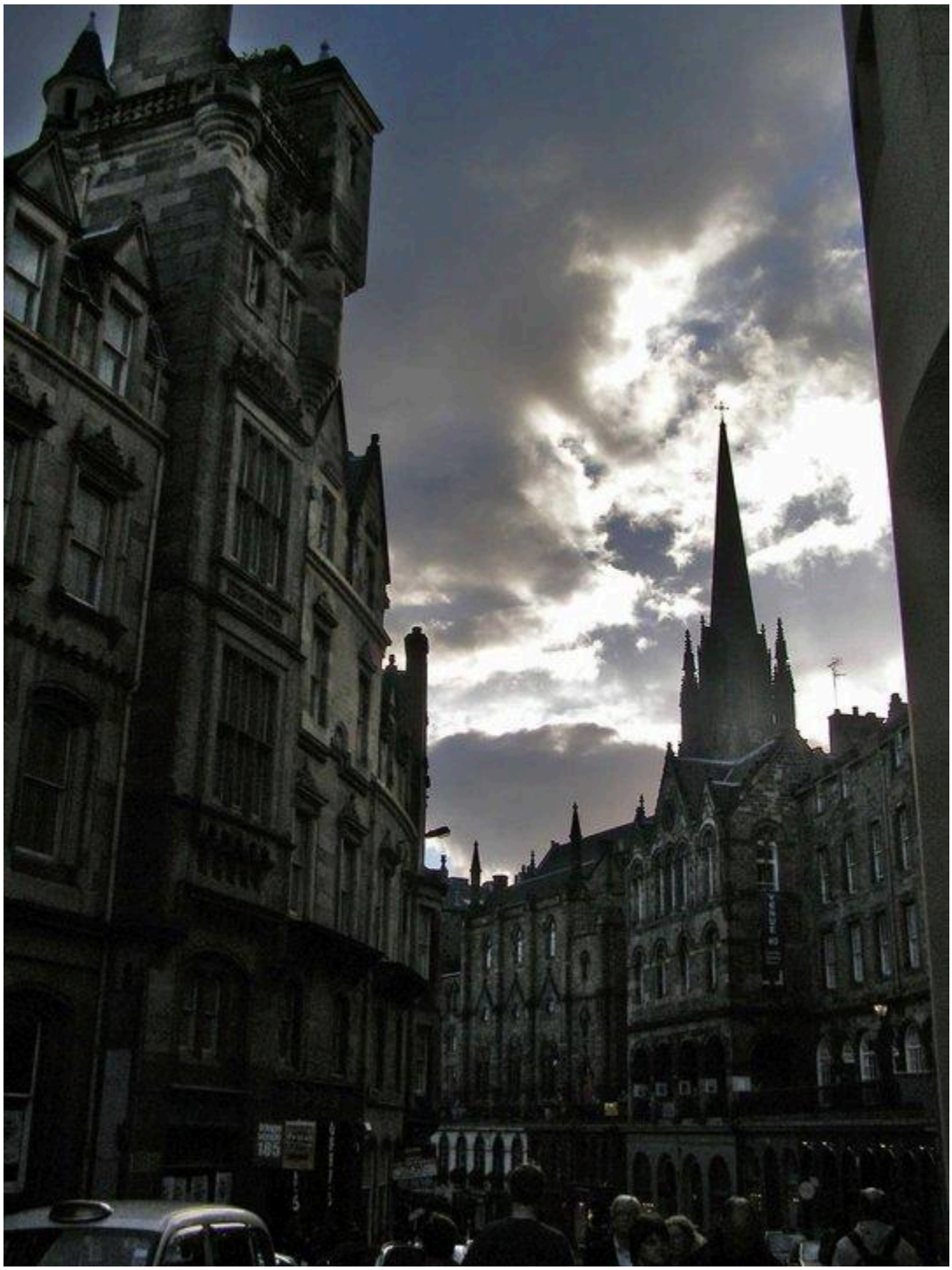
The king of kings of kings of sand.

The great empire falls in 200 years.

We're here.

Jasmine Hall

Edinburgh City Street



Dylan Holubowich

From the Arctic

No one can be certain, exactly,
How much time must elapse before
Things take on the qualities of infinity.
Little was ever made of snowfall – and yet
The ground never devoid of snow;
Morning never without its trademark glinting blindness –
Though a necessary one, for the day the snow melts
It will be as if forced to see in the dark.
It is natural to depend upon what is ubiquitous.
We will adapt – memories will fade and grow anew
Underwritten with winter gloss and wildberries.
The wind beneath our breath matches
The color of forgotten fronds, laid to rest
In crystalline caskets.
Do not mistake uniformity for monotony –
We may look the same when we land
But never while we are falling.
If not for the powder encasing our prints
How are we to see where we have come from?
We aren't – they only exist to be filled again
In this lifetime or another
By those poems which fall
Forever in dichotomous skies.

Joshua Barron

An Ode to Snow

The snow covers everything in a serene blanket of white, hushing the colors and sounds of the world alike, bringing a uniform calm to everything, disturbances are few and far between, a peace washes over you, the kind you can only get from complete stillness and silence, you lose yourself for a moment, lost in thought hoping this momentary bliss doesn't end, it does however when the seemingly unbreakable silence is broken, whether it be by a dog barking or a car passing by, you're taken away from that state of zen, a rude awakening most unwanted, but you go back to your day, still at peace knowing tranquility is only a window away.

Amber Scoon

Deep in the woods, all is well



Ismael Maranon

Will Be Mist

April showers May
Bring flowers, though dare I say
It still had to rain.

Madison Rosado

Blue in Bloom

Baby blue, smooth as calfskin leather,
gentle like a baby's bottom.
Midnight blue, dark skies, and sparkling stars.
Rain droplets choose my forehead as a canvas, petrichor in the air.
Electric blue, to groove
and move between time and space.
Royal blue, caviar, and lobster tails
diamond bowls for dog food and side dishes.
Turquoise blue, the color of my childhood bedroom, posters plastered across the walls,
full body mirror, loving the reflection.

Jason Murphy

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum 2023



Harry Brandt

Artifacts

Sitting at the morning table
Alone sipping coffee and connecting
The dots of my day,
My waking fingers circle last night's wine stain
That seeped into the veins of the table top -
Creating a memory to endure forever.
Your delicate artifacts are embedded
In my mahogany bones, unfading as our future.

Now I see without looking,
Your watch nestled upon the window sill
Above the kitchen sink - I recall I noticed it days before,
aroused that our time is now each other's.
And I know hanging in the foyer
Is your soft sweater - its orange
More perfect than October -
Kibitzing with my rumpled peacoat,
And I smile.

It's only when I feel the sun's nudge
Against the back of my neck
- a cosmic push to get me up and face this new indelible journey -
That I lift my purple tipped fingers to my lips
And taste the wine that will nourish us for a lifetime.

Kaitlyn Grassia

Kona, Hawaii



Joshua Barron

Oasis

His eyes looked to the horizon yet he only saw more of the same. The sand stretched before him, a seemingly endless wave of yellow and red. He saw no signs of civilization despite how hard he scanned his surroundings. He fell to his knees in defeat realizing that he was well and truly fucked. To him, continuing now would be nothing more than an exercise in futility.

Resigning himself to his fate he fell further, this time onto his back spreading himself across the sand. He thought to himself that if he has to die he may as well enjoy his final day on earth. He started to lounge on the sand resting his hands behind his head and closing his eyes with hours passing as he did so. As he lazed about taking in the sun's rays, a large gob of acrid spittle fell on his forehead.

He opens his eyes and finds a camel looking down on him. A little delirious from the hours of sunbathing and days without water, his reaction was quite subdued. He simply looked up at the camel and said, "Watch where you're drooling, pal." The camel returns his gaze and speaks in a deep scratchy voice as if his humps were filled with cigarette smoke rather than water "Sorry about that, it's hard to wipe away saliva with these," it says, lifting one of its feet. "Eh, don't worry about it, maybe just avoid my face next time, ay."

Slightly charmed by the man's nonchalant nature, the camel snorts and replies, "Fair enough." Minutes pass in silence until the veil is broken by the camel as he asks with a hint of worry in his voice "Are you just going to lay there." The man takes a deep breath enjoying the arid desert air and says "I think so." The camel, seemingly content with the man's response, nods his head and lays down beside the man, tucking his legs beneath him. They enjoy each other's company as they bathe in the sunlight as hours pass them by.

The sun's daily journey west is almost complete, with the sky now painted a deep red. Feeling sleep call his name, the man turns to the camel and attempts to come up with a conversation starter in a bid to stay awake. Only one question comes to his mind, however, and bereft of anything better to say, he asks through parched lips, "Is this the end for me?" The camel, taken aback by the question, bows his head in sorrow and responds coolly, "I think so." The man lets out a big sigh, and he closes his eyes.

He wakes up a few hours later, taking in the splendor of the star filled desert sky, constellations playing out before him like long lost stories. He never noticed how beautiful the stars were, but now it was all he could focus on, minutes passed as he looked in awe at the celestial bodies light years away from where he lay. He then thought of his new hump bearing friend and how he would love this vista. Excited to share this newfound wonder with him, he sat up and looked where the camel once lay. Much to his dismay, he was no longer there. Under his breath, the man said, "I didn't know camels were Irish." He chuckled, amused with himself, and fell back down, realizing just how cold the desert had become. The sand and stars provided no warmth, only a pleasant view, which didn't count for much to the now shivering man. He thought to himself that the view is almost too pretty for a man about to die.

The man swallowed hard and looked back to the sky, stargazing as his mind wandered. He thought of all the things he'd never see again, no more sunsets, no more time spent with friends, and most importantly to him, in this moment no more stars. As his breath slows so does his mind, his thoughts leaking from his head. His brain now surprisingly empty experienced no fear, no panic, not even some odd acceptance. No thoughts remained in his head besides one particularly stubborn one. He thought about how brilliantly the stars shined in the sky. He closed his eyes and said to no one in particular, not realizing these were to be his final words, "Were they always like this?"

Or maybe these wouldn't be his last words as the man wakes up to the feeling of movement and the morning sun on his face, he opens his eyes and only sees a blob of brown. As he comes to, he realizes he is slumped over a camel sitting between two large humps. Disoriented and confused, the man says, "Am I dead?" The camel answers him, "No, though my back wishes you were."

The man exhales out his nose and responds, "Sorry, I'll be sure to die quicker next time." The camel laughs uproariously and ribs the man, "Next time, are you planning more treks through the desert." The man responds, chuckling, "I'm not so easily dissuaded, I'm not going to let one bad trip ruin such a gorgeous biome for me." He continues, "Besides, I now have a noble steed to accompany me on my future treks." The camel replies with a twinge of slyness in his tone, "Is that so? And who is this steed?" The man excitedly says, "You, of course! I find that other mounts are severely lacking in the conversation department, while you are downright verbose." The camel is warmed by the man's words and says, "Let's make sure you don't die

before you start making plans, we're not out of the desert yet." Sobered by these words, the man simply nods.

The camel continues his trek with graceful steps trying his best not to disturb his passenger. Their journey lasts a couple hours, with mindless chatter and jokes flowing between the two like water. Sadly the man could not drink their conversation no matter how well it flowed. Luckily for him, his thirst would soon be quenched by something else. He spotted that something else on the horizon, a small oasis encircled by a smattering of shrubs and small trees. In the middle of these shrubs was the man's salvation, a shockingly clear and crystalline spring that would've made his mouth water if he were physically able. The man points towards the spring and shouts, "Onward Ho!" The camel responds quickly, "What did you just call me?" Despite his joking protests the camel picks up his pace and makes his way towards the spring. As they reach the oasis, the man jumps off the camel, using him as a diving board, and cannonballs into the spring.

The man slams his coccyx against the bottom of the quite shallow pool. He screams out "Goddamn, why did I think this was deep enough." He quickly disregards his ass pain and starts slurping up the water in the spring. The camel watches on as the man drinks what seems like gallons. After a while, the man's aquatic desires are sated, content he lounges in the pool of water. He looks to the camel and says, "Come on in the water is nice and cool." Not one to decline an invitation, the camel enters the spring and begins splashing water over himself, letting out a fulfilled sigh. The man and camel enjoy the water for hours, their skin raisining. Soon, night falls again. The man melts into the water further, and he looks up at the stars once more, watching them twinkle and shine. A smile crosses his face and a feeling of peace overcomes him.

Yeukai Chiroodza-Imeh

Tariro Hope 36x23.5



Jason Murphy

EXCERPT FROM: WE ARE A BEAR

ALL THREE ROLES HERE SHOULD BE PLAYED BY ADULT ACTORS.

SCENE: AT ZOO, IN FRONT OF BEAR EXHIBIT.

CHILD: I want to see the penguins.

PARENT: We don't have time today.

ANOTHER CHILD: Bears are stupid.

CHILD: Bears are awesome. Penguins stink!

ANOTHER CHILD: Bears can't swim fast underwater!

CHILD: Penguins can't smite their enemies!

ANOTHER CHILD: Bears eat stupid, mis-born cretins like you!

(Tussle)

CHILD: Penguins crap in your shoes and blame the stench on you!

ANOTHER CHILD: Bears are hairy stooges of satan!

CHILD: Penguins are nature's minstrel show!

ANOTHER CHILD: Codswallop!

CHILD: Horsefeathers!

PARENT: Stop! Stop that right now!

ANOTHER CHILD: I wanna see the monkeys!

CHILD: Penguins! You got to see this stupid bear!

PARENT: We are not going to either one.

ANOTHER CHILD: Monkeys are our cousins!

CHILD: Atheist! Atheist!

PARENT: Calm down!

CHILD: He always gets what he wants!

PARENT: That's not true. Neither of you ever get what you want because you are always acting stupid.

ANOTHER CHILD: I wanna see the monkeys!

PARENT: It is time to go home! We've seen half the zoo!

(Screen or spotlight shows Dippin' Dots Ice Cream stand.)

CHILD: Oooh, oooh! Dippin' dots! I want Dippin' Dots!

ANOTHER CHILD: Yeah, Dippin' dots!

CHILDREN: Please, please, please!

PARENT: No, absolutely not! You do not deserve the ice cream of the future.

(Children are shocked and silenced.)

Have either of you ever thought that I might have my own list of animals to see? I wanted to see the elephants. But we saw your animals as if I don't even count. Instead of seeing elephants, I am losing my mind listening to you fight and complain. You don't deserve the ice cream of the future. We're going home and we're going to eat crappy, crappy, ice cream. Lame. Substandard. Do you understand me? You will eat lousy ice cream with no grousing. You do not deserve the ice cream of the future.

(They hang their heads.)

Do you?

ALL CHILDREN: No.

PARENT: You listen to me and you listen good. We are going to the gift shop and you will each pick one thing— one!— and then we are going home. There better not be any more of this bull crap. Got it?

(The children start to exit and begin screaming that it is the others' fault just as they exit. An actor or dancer, dressed as a PEACOCK, enters. He reaches center stage and unfurls his tail feathers. One of the children runs across the stage shouting.)

CHILD: Kill the pigeon! Kill the pigeon!

(They exit.)

Jason Murphy

The Empire Has Changed – Beacon Hill



Madison Rosado

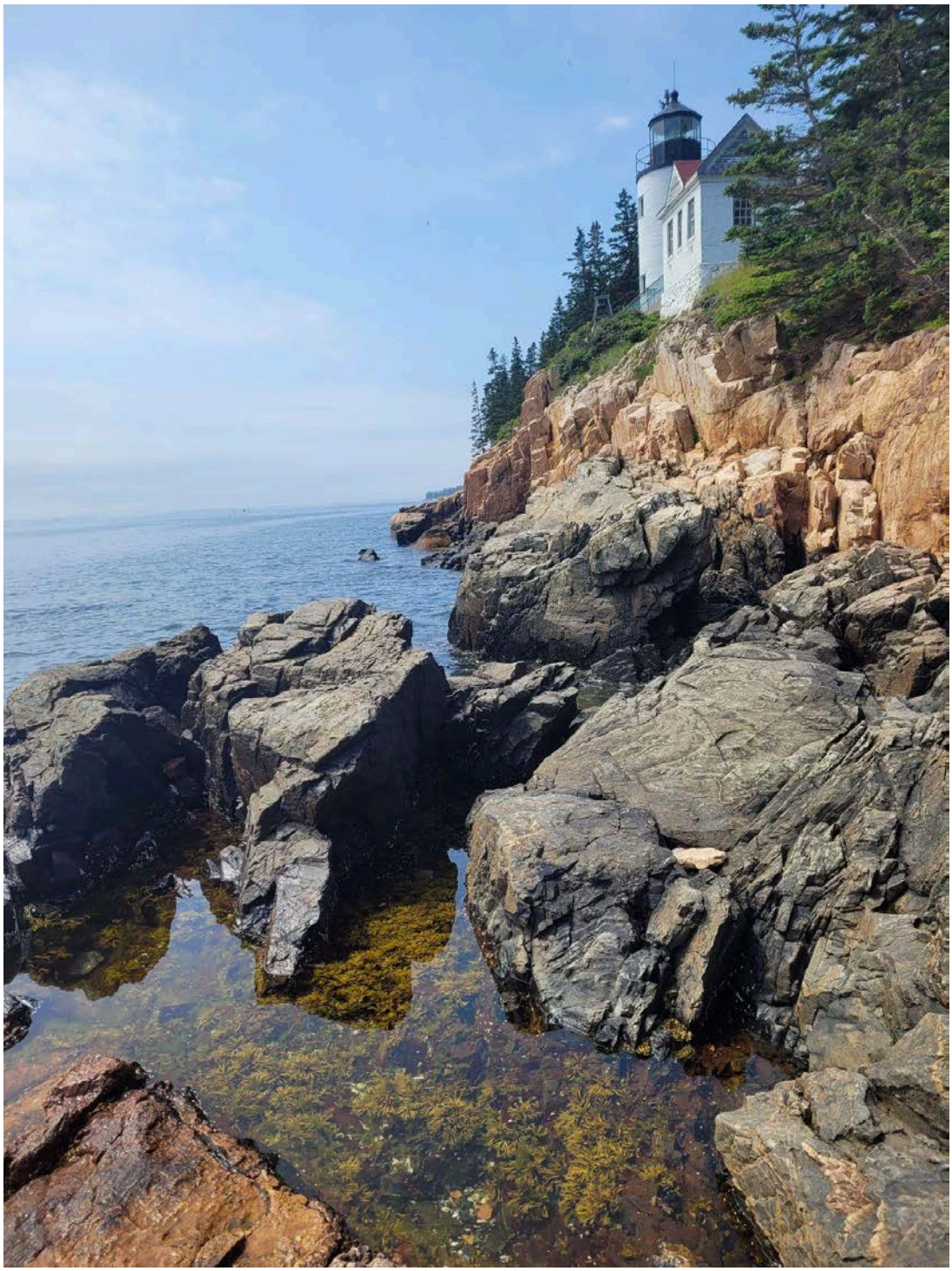
Bubble Gum Daydream

My jaws clench with every chew.
My slippery tongue plays with
juicy bubble gum bouncing
back and forth against
saliva slicked walls.
As I blow, it magnifies
until all I see
is a world of pink
swiftly sweeping me
off the ground
into the air,
freely swaying,
lifting higher and higher.
“Pop” goes the gum exploding
in every direction, leaving scraps
cascading across the blue sky
as I settle on a creamy cloud
and look down
on scattered puzzle pieces
like a shattered family.

I’m leaving this world behind.

Joshua Barron

On the Rocks of Acadia



Dylan Holubowich

Giving Directions

nono said I you won't find it there
not next to cascading concrete *no* motors
it's rather simple see that boulder take a left
quietly! you see it can only be found
when the humdrum grows ripe and much too loud
view sunkissed stillness through the squintshade
head heavy with haze lolling sideways
on the drive home eyelid insides cast in ochre
you'll find it where the lullabies ache
& parlay themselves into tomorrow's nostalgia
running along the wood chips don't you remember
when that tree still stood warping roots lay bare
you'll find it there only you
may watch the leaves settle into spongy ground
where three-tone treetops make pit stops for
a man fly-fishing a sunset a Doritos wrapper
honestly I'm not so sure anymore
things are strange now and I am very tired
but at least it's quiet here

or check the wind isn't it always
  in the wind

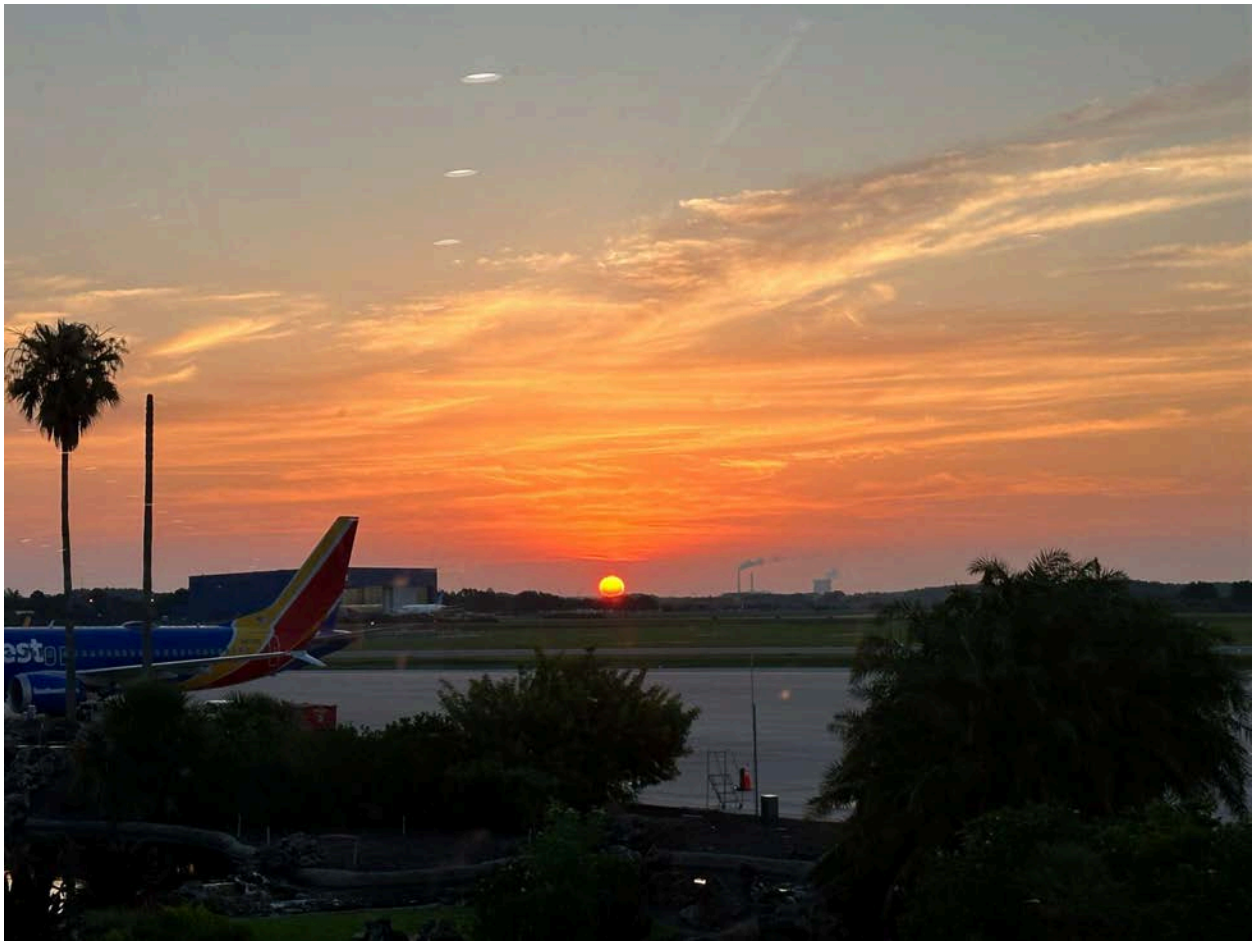
Sage

Pathway From Starstruck To Struck-Down

At the airport, a line of men waits impatient outside the restroom.
They go in, one by one, but none of them ever come out again.
There's a dog, one of those little pieces of scruff held in a stroller.
"Oh, to be what someone dreads," thinks the pilot as he boards
for the hundredth time this week the same shuttle plane bound
from Chicago to Bradley International, which is really too small
to call International, but there's committees for these sorts of things.
The dog in the airport makes everyone feel safe, makes everyone
believe in the promise of life after death. His sad brown eyes say,
"Why haven't you started over yet?" As if anyone at Gate 58 owes
an answer beyond, "I'm trying, but for this dream of hinges."
Outside the airport, a spur-heeled rooster is thrown in a ring.
Together, we fight the American Dream for the American Dream.
The rooster fights for dried corn and hens and the next fight.
Can a hero have both impact and infallibility? Or, really,
is it the curse of the mythic to fall from grace into meaning?
I am a woman when I am in a doorway. I am a man when I am
in the belly of a whale. I am neither when I am kissed lightly
on the face by the wind. A red-winged praxis begins a darkness.
That much too much? The pilot's wings tuck under his cap
every time he ducks into the jetway as it rolls up to meet
his arriving aircraft, saying, "First came people; then the poems."
I turn on the small machine that tells me how to dance while the sky
keens a death-rattle with every jet engine that passes overhead.
I start my day with plans to survive it and, failing that, how
I'll introduce myself to the Underworld when I go hurtling down.
And then a list of remorses. Gargantuan is the shape of dawn
when it comes unexpectedly upon you as you toil away at
the increasingly important work of knowing who your friends are.
Inevitable the axle unspun, unspinning. Leagues beyond leagues
beyond, there is still more sea to discover, and yet still more clouds.
Yes, the summer's lavender wind alights a petal on my hand. Yes,
ornament and function collate through culture to form language
wide enough to embody every problem some spiteful gods send us.
I tell you there's a kingdom in the clouds full of rain.
You tell me there's always a way through this. Against my best
judgement of astral courseways and constellations, I believe you.
I give myself to the world's bending knee. I surrender myself
to the dawn and its vanishing dark.

Kaitlyn Grassia

Morning Flight



Emmarly Larocca

Where Are You From?

I am from garlic, basil, fresh feta, and extra virgin olive oil

I am from picking tomatoes on the vine to picking opioids on the floor

I am from hard lessons learnt before the age of ten, and the broken reflection you see when you're fifteen (I wonder if they correlate)

I am from the tap,

tap,

tapping of your foot and on your window

I am from the *pit* in your stomach that you get when reality sinks in, for the first time of many

I am from unescapable generational labyrinths of thought and emotion

I am from "its okay" when the *last* thing it will ever be is okay, but you will never know

I am from social workers visiting like old friends

I am from tear stained cheeks and full body blushes

I am from the fairy garden- I rule the kingdom with an open heart

I am from dust that blows in the wind (straight into your eyes)

I am from the pure overwhelming feeling of yearning and loss

I am from specs of starlight yet to flicker out

I am from the gentle lurking ghost in the attic

I am from the strangle vines wrapped around my family tree

I am from light, love, and undeniable laughter with the purpose to spread it

I am from every mispronunciation of my name

I am from every letter that wasn't sent and just enough words said

I am from the clear difference of success and failure, except I walk along the line of it like a tightrope

I am from everything you may expect me to be from and more

Ryann Anderson

[SUM: (TRUE RETURN)]

every Sunday
Quabbin
Fall ing leaves
boil-point port-o-potty kingdom
brimming w/ 1000s of Lady Bugs
Little me terrified still a little traumatized now
actually But!
Observe Le Tower's Bee-Guardian!—
it did not like us [...]
fleeing nearly went ass[inine]
over tea kettle kneecaps' funeral: an almost production!
Still then down the trail over the wood gate
past the rock wall yay high mossy, aged,
moist [...] [*ewh…gross*]
A clearing grass crunching deers leaping
birds singing eating from palms
we did some squealing sent them flying
through sun-shining, peeking over trees
childlike we came to
the crossroads green
the large puddle rock hopping
kite flying swimming
Reservoir shoreline at Hank's Meadow gleaning
Running down the mound dad getting worried
us three lost but free—
-ly getting even more lost missing, in fact,
an hour + on accident
almost having the sheriff called [...]
on accident :D
Yet, snowflakes floating lobbing munchkins
through back windows towards biding-time deer
Not allowed, sure, but no one needs to
know these simple joys
these memories flowing towards a place
hoping everything falls into place
a place I've never been younger and surely never been older
still, a home that always will be a place I come to because
because what else is there to do
but, go home

Editor's Note

A huge shoutout to our contributors! Thank you for your work and creativity that you submitted to this year's edition of BLOOM. It's your submissions and support that make BLOOM possible! The world needs work like yours, so please, continue to grace it with your wonder and craft.

A special thank you to the entire BLOOM editorial staff. Your efforts and contributions make the issue fun, interactive, and meaningful:

Joshua Barron
Kaitlyn Grassia
Kiara Harvey
Avery Jansen

And to the Editors in Chief:
Ryann Anderson
Dylan Holubowich
Adam Sarlan

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Lastly, we acknowledge you, our readers, who made this possible with your interest and support. Thank you for seeking wonder in the world. We hope you enjoyed this issue of BLOOM just as much as we enjoyed making it!