UArts SCHOOL OF DANCE

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In the Blur

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Introduction

This artist book explores how memory lives and moves within my body, traveling and blurring the boundaries of time. A collusion of nowness that ensures the preservation of my ancestors as well as the memories of family, friendship, love, and dreams. What might that exposure look like in motion?

Traces I wear on my face, my hands, and my body, like a map traveling forward and backwards simultaneously, a vector that allows for new memories to spill out of the folds into the space of the in between. Within this transitional negative space lie the pages, the photographs, attached and unattached to the scattered narratives said, unsaid, and documented.

Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank my wonderful family for supporting me in every decision I've ever made and for encouraging me to reach farther than I thought possible. You all have been my rock, providing strength and stability that has grounded me on this whirlwind I call life. You've reminded me to stay true to myself, remembering where I come from and what's most important. I love you all so much!

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A big thank you to VK for inspiring me to pursue poetry, to write daily, and take my writing to a deeper level from a different perspective.

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WHAT LIES

BENEATH

SHARKS TOOTH ISLAND

When I was younger, my siblings spoke of a magical place tucked away on the Potomac River in Virginia. They called it Sharks Tooth Island. My grandfather whom I'd never met had a house not far from there that he'd built for my grandmother. After his passing it was left to my grandmother and then to my father. My siblings would take regular summer trips for a few weeks at a time with my dad while I was studying dance at summer intensives, and years would pass before I would realize what I had been missing.

It was a small single story waterfront property with a grassy driveway, roll out windows, a faded sun porch, and orange and gold decor, typical of the 1970s. It had well water, a septic tank, no dishwasher, and no garbage disposal. The TV had rabbit ears, and the one telephone hung in the laundry room on the wall. There were no modern day conveniences, no cell phones, no internet, and no computer. It was simple in every way and absolutely perfect. The kitchen held an orange vinyl booth that I'd have frozen waffles in and watch my grandmother cook, and it was in that very kitchen that I taught myself how to turn. *Days of Our Lives* was playing in the living room, my grandmother was making lunch, and I'd stand fidgeting at the kitchen island, feet planted in first position on an old pink waist trimmer, pushing off of the Formica countertops going round and round, completely unaware that I was learning how to spot and that I'd later become an excellent turner.

Moving forward in time, my father would be in that same kitchen making tuna fish sandwiches to oldies on the radio and *Days of Our Lives* still on the TV in the background. He had befriended a young woman in high school who had become one of the lead actresses, hence the reason it was always on but also because my grandmother had gotten us all somewhat hooked. Years later it'd be my turn. I'd be in the kitchen running after my nephew as a baby and entertaining friends with my sister, slowly filling the shoes of my loved ones, walking in their footprints, and creating new memories as the older ones faded, became forgotten, and/or passed on with the soul.

When I was in high school, my sister and I would drive down on weekends in the summer with the windows down and Bohemian Rhapsody blasting on the radio as we belted out the lyrics with the wind in our hair and a long empty road ahead without a care in the world. It was our escape to a little piece of paradise that belonged to the family. This house had a charm to it and was filled with an abundance of love. The keys were left in the cars, the doors unlocked, and the neighbors would just knock and come in for dinner. It was a different time then and had a huge impact on the interactions I had with people and the friendships I made in years to come. Our neighbor was a painter and his parents had been quite friendly with my grandparents which was how we acquired the land and later the house. They had owed money to my grandparents and repaid them with the land that the house was later built on. Their son later became a close friend to the family and to my sister and me. We would crab on the piers under the stars and he'd play guitar and sing. During the day he'd take us out on his boat, jumping off and swimming in the brackish Potomac with his young daughter. He was my ride and formal introduction to the private magical island, just a short boat right away. I'd sit in the front with his daughter bouncing up and down as the waves cooled our sun soaked cheeks and tanned bodies. Upon arrival, the no trespassing signs would shout out so we anchored a ways out in the water, swimming incognito, running low in the tall sea grass, careful not to be seen. The owners of the island were known to come out with shotguns to scare trespassers off their property so we had to be extra careful. We spent hours scaling the beach looking for our so-called treasure.

I'd never seen anything like it, and words could never describe what we saw. As the waves trickled in and teased the sand, the shark's teeth glistened in the crest. Handfuls of teeth we'd scoop out of the waves and tide pools at low tide, leaving with bags of twenty or thirty. In the evenings we'd all share dinner and examine our findings of the day, anxious to see who had found the largest tooth. My last trip to the island was during my parents divorce. My nephew was a baby or a toddler I should say, and that was the day I found the baby Megalodon tooth, the baby's tooth of the largest prehistoric shark in history, on Sharks Tooth Island. For reference, a typical Megalodon tooth is approximately the size of an adult palm. My tooth was a little larger than a silver dollar.

The island has since become pretty famous, and if you Google it today, you can pay a fee to go to the island and search for teeth, keeping whatever you might find. There's a part of me that's dying to go back, pay the fee and continue my hunt for teeth, adding to the hundreds I already have in a bowl, that I look at from time to time and remember the good old days, hiding in the sea grass searching for sunken treasure, and the other part of me dreams of returning to the house to see what has become of what was once ours.

My senior year of high school I persuaded my sister to leave me alone at the house for a week, with no car, no access to anything but the food in the cabinets and a landline. I felt the need to be alone and think, or find myself. During this week I spent many evenings watching the sun catch the sky on fire and the sea sing it to sleep. It was quiet, peaceful and secluded, shut off from the outside world and from my unraveling family. It was on that beach, swept away by a storm, where I wrote my first poem until the sky grew dark and I could no longer see anything except the stars and glowing fossils in the water. The same week I sat on top of the washing machine and had a conversation with the Director of Pennsylvania Ballet on the olive green landline phone, cord stretched to the limit, and was offered a job that'd I'd have for 23 yrs. I left the river and headed home to Fredericksburg with my neighbor and a truck load of furniture to furnish an apartment in Philadelphia. The next time and last time I would see the house, my father would be living there, until it was sold later in the divorce with all of its magic inside, all but the memories.

In time's absence tinnitus speaks louder,
a jabbering clock with arms outstretched,
introducing itself with a handshake to an amplifier

Dinner is ready,
it's time,
time to go.
The bell calls, echoing in the breeze of bikes downhill with arms held high
and mother grows impatient,
ringing louder

but I'm *L O S T…*

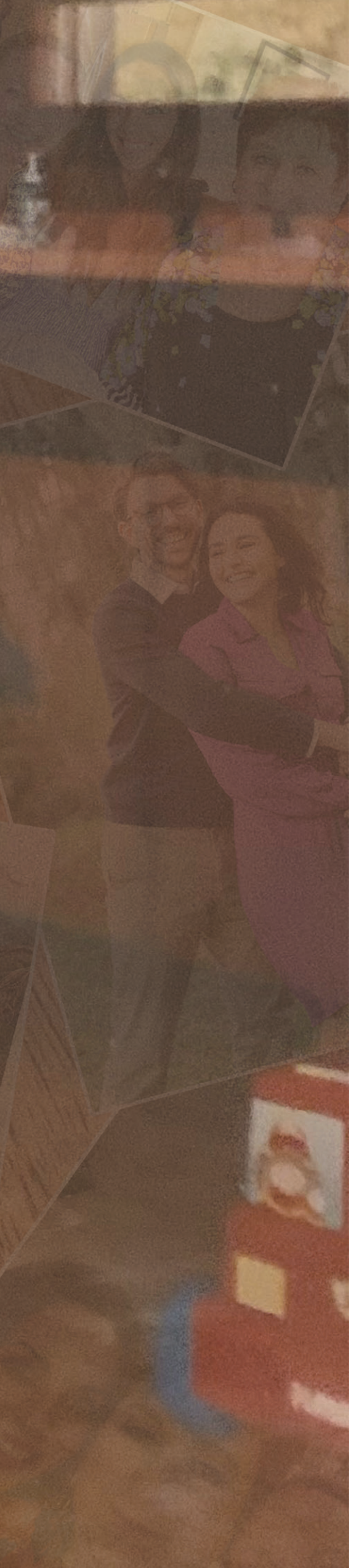
Drifting in enlightenment's tears down the River of memories past
without a boat,
unaware of how to get Home

Stolen, sold,
a birthright erased, ignored,
a hand gone limp,
still without pulse,
a heartbeat almost healed,
silenced by a breath mint of lidocaine
A signature promised,
the Will stood up,
opportunity passing with the soul

Existence turned to ashes,
fingerprints worn away by the tide

I see words,
letters floating in the water,
in the ripple where the sun glistens,
faces reflecting,
ghostly images of those from faded polaroids,
searching for mysticism

The past,
buried years ago resurfaces,
releasing itself,
tumbling ashore in the exhalation of the tide,
worn
weathered
remembered
a reminder of what still
remains



Things

Things I collect

In memories

Pockets

With change,

Tissues

Words on a napkin

From a glass of wine

With strangers

I met in a bar

Of noise

Voices overlapping,

A conversation

A poem

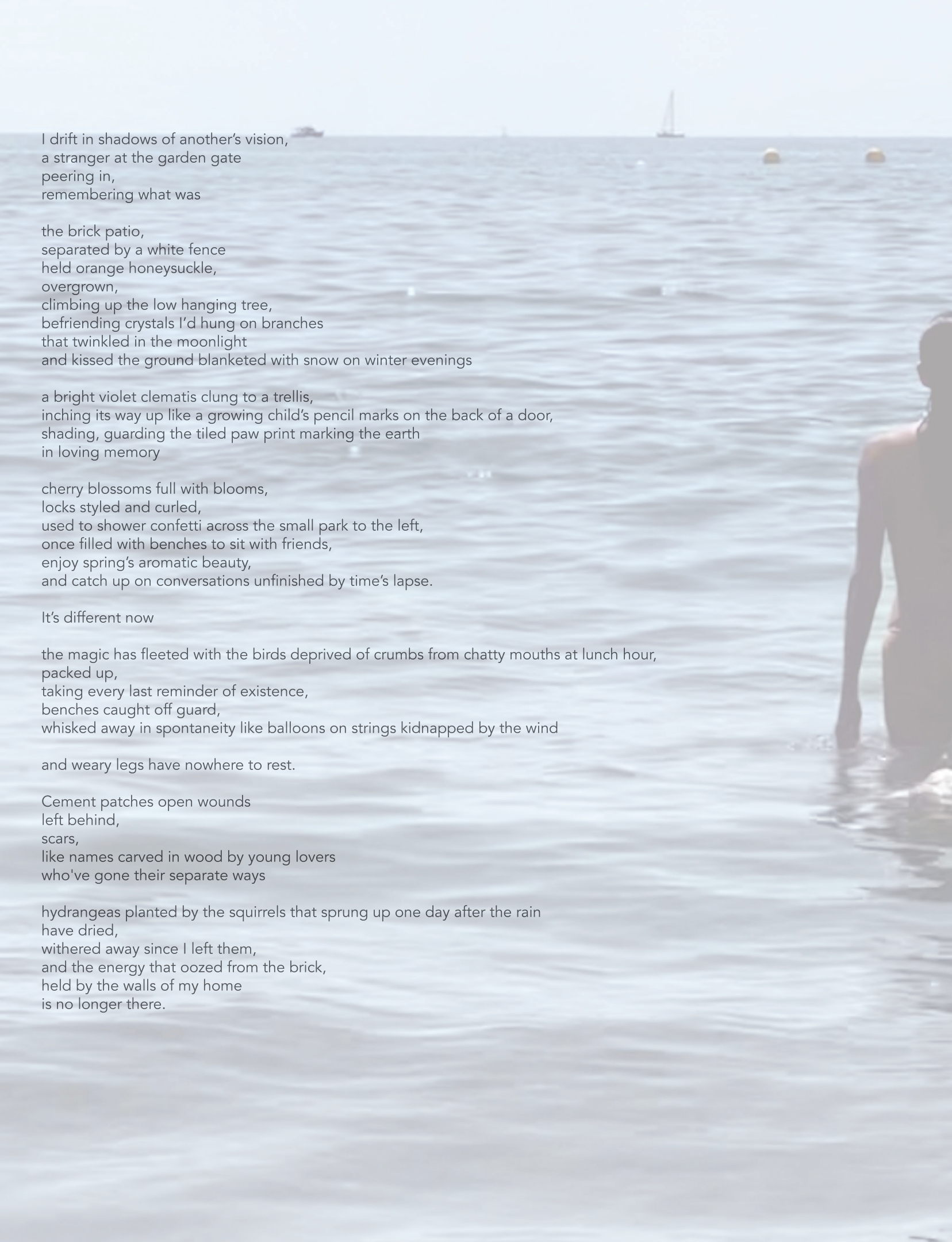
Linked together by chaos

In the space

In the street

Supporting narratives on the souls

Worn by life



I drift in shadows of another's vision,
a stranger at the garden gate
peering in,
remembering what was

the brick patio,
separated by a white fence
held orange honeysuckle,
overgrown,
climbing up the low hanging tree,
befriending crystals I'd hung on branches
that twinkled in the moonlight
and kissed the ground blanketed with snow on winter evenings

a bright violet clematis clung to a trellis,
inching its way up like a growing child's pencil marks on the back of a door,
shading, guarding the tiled paw print marking the earth
in loving memory

cherry blossoms full with blooms,
locks styled and curled,
used to shower confetti across the small park to the left,
once filled with benches to sit with friends,
enjoy spring's aromatic beauty,
and catch up on conversations unfinished by time's lapse.

It's different now

the magic has fleeted with the birds deprived of crumbs from chatty mouths at lunch hour,
packed up,
taking every last reminder of existence,
benches caught off guard,
whisked away in spontaneity like balloons on strings kidnapped by the wind

and weary legs have nowhere to rest.

Cement patches open wounds
left behind,
scars,
like names carved in wood by young lovers
who've gone their separate ways

hydrangeas planted by the squirrels that sprung up one day after the rain
have dried,
withered away since I left them,
and the energy that oozed from the brick,
held by the walls of my home
is no longer there.

Time has robbed nature of love,
running away with its youth,
selfish greediness,
leaving no availability

and my memories doubt themselves
with dreams' competitive influence.

Memories held secrets at 720 Bradford Alley,
sold and repainted,
erasing the fingerprints of those from before,
fingerprints sweaty from Love
oils from another's skin
loved,
patchouli and cinnamon on my skin
hanging in the air
like spilled curry inside the cabinet
when I moved in

and I too have moved

with a new garden,
mature
tended to
paid attention to
and spoken to on still mornings
before the sun hums

hydrangeas flourish
wild and free,
cooling their heavy heads in gracious shades of blue and pink on the afternoon's damp stone,
and dogwoods tap my head in passing, showing off the delicacy of their
new cream saucers filled with remnants
of the afternoon's tears
that reflect years of happiness
glowing in the ghostly outline
of the moon's hypnotic mantra

And I wonder

What becomes of that left behind
The seeds planted
in the ground
in the womb
that linger
and whisper in the quiet of night
as the moon sighs upon silk shades
fluffy and cool,
quieting visions that refuse to accept that time was impatient and had no mercy?

Days

Weeks

Now

Then

Familiar faces greet one another with a

sparkling Eye

have grown accustomed to

Eye have been let down

Eye have grieved

and Eye have overcome years stolen

from beneath silent feet

searching for guidance,

searching for a

glimpse into a mirrored futurity unveiled

I cannot see *But*

Eye see the form

Eye see the eyes *Eye feel the energy*

But

Eye don't C U beyond these walls *Who are U beneath the sky?*

I don't know You *Or do I?*

My Eyes know Urs,

But I don't see You, naked, unveiled *breathing and free* *You are a stranger,*

l o s t *in a breeze,*

wandering in the aura *of the blew ski.*

Eye remember a younger U,

a face imagined, sketched in my mind,

resting on an outline of inaccuracies

U have grown into what Eye once envisioned

when U and Eye were searching to discover

our true selves

My writing is dark like my hair

My body is
a map of constellations
kissed by the sun too many times,
a ship a sail towards a brighter horizon
carrying heavy thoughts on broad shoulders,
hair blowing in the whisper of conversation's past
My mind is
cut pages reassembled,
fragmented images of
reality, memories, dreams
blurring measurements of time,
collages forming a temporary band aid
and a mask for the careless fool who cannot see,
who refuses to see
the bloodstained tears
oozing like glue from the lashes that
the search for perfectionism
repeatedly cast across my eyes
My dancing is
raw, pure, truth,
the body's song
informed by existence, memory and lucid dreams,
the imagination's ability to step
into animated trips in time
with a dose of surrealism,

escaping reality and living the intangible

A painting in my bedroom, Artist: Martin Poole

BENEATH

DARKNESS

We speak of traces. Those left behind. Spirits, ghosts, or the presence that lingers in hallways, in spaces, and our thoughts. Throughout my family, especially on my mother's side there have been many occasions where traces have been present and noticed. I encountered the presence not so long ago. The voices, the shuffling, the smells. I lived in a renovated shoe factory for 3 1/2 years, and inside that space, I experienced many wonderful memories and many things I still can't explain, and neither can my mother or sister. Shortly after I moved, at the foot of my bed, I began hearing a shuffling back-and-forth throughout the night. It woke me many times throughout the night, but I never thought too much of it, just assuming it was noise from another apartment, above or beside me. Then something shifted. I heard my name in a loud whisper. The shuffling continued at the foot of the bed, and eventually became white noise. Shortly after, my mother and sister came to Philadelphia to visit, and living in a loft apartment, they slept on an air mattress at the foot of my bed. I'd never told them about the shuffling or the voice I heard, and I didn't need to.

My sister experienced it first hand. She woke up twice that night with gasps of fear, claiming something had walked across the bed. The first time was a walking across her, and the second time was a walking through the middle of the bed. I later told them the story about the shuffling and the voice that I had heard right in that same spot as the air mattress. I never heard anything again after they left Philadelphia, but my mother's home has never been quite the same since they returned. My mother and sister shared a house in Virginia, and after leaving Philadelphia, my mother has had many strange events take place in the house that seem to be intensifying now. At first, we thought it was electrical, with the lights turning on randomly, and the ceiling fan and TV turning back on after they'd been turned off, but how do you explain a battery operated candle turning on in the guest bathroom rarely used, after having been turned off weeks ago? How do you explain the toggle switch reading light on my nephews headboard that was on upon returning from a week long vacation? Whatever it was in my apartment clung to my mother and sister and still lingers in her house today.

I love you

I've loved you

I'll always love you

It was then

Then is now

Today

that eyes kissed good morning in a lover's

bed and basked in the rain's saturated iris

My heart has grown fuller with time

Full of love

Full of tears

The butterflies have since multiplied

Various shades of passion flutter from eyelashes grown out,

and wave goodbye as they descend down cheeks to a broken heart

like blood from a wound that will not heal,

like the hole in the top of Joey's head

where the chaos jumped from the windows on fire and swam towards the

open door,

away from the hand that pulled the trigger

It was

Then

Now

Today

A day remembered

Never forgotten,

A permanent scar in my line of vision

The sky was similar

Like today

and the day Joey took his last breath

Clear, endless azure blue

Today on this day,

the day that we met,

I long to feel your arms…

The arms that hold me,

The arms that shut me out,

The ones that know me,

The ones that protect me,

Reject me,

and are absent when needed most

Pain is absent with togetherness

no silence, no void, no gap, no space in between

Where thoughts interrupt one another

Time is still…

As is Joey's pulse

Unable to continue

Forward is

without

Without

death

A life beyond,

Another realm,

A door opening to your face with another name,

A signature on wish paper from another's wedding

f

a

l

l

s

A shooting star on the beach holds an empty shell's dreams

and burns the hand that will never wear your ring.

August 29, 2022

Hello old friend,

It's been awhile. I think of you often and long for our silent conversations, the ones before words, those never taking place. It was you who knew me, spoke my language, the nonverbal kind, our undeniable connection lacking judgment. You were nowhere, always there, late but timely. Do you remember? I was last to leave. We'd celebrate and toast to a successful evening, or I'd cry so hard from disappointment that tears diluted the wine. You never left my side. With open arms you welcomed me, shielding me from criticism with unconditional love. It was more than one could ask for, and more than anyone had ever given me. We shared stories and created memories. It seems like a lifetime ago and yesterday that I blew you a kiss, thanked you for putting up with me, and cried on your shoulder. My heart broke apart that day, like the scattered rose petals crushed by the falling curtain. I never meant to leave you

behind

with echoes of secrets

in the emptiness of memories

a temporary goodbye

a union on the other side

a pro mise

I miss you old friend, but you are always with me, even NOW.

Love always,

Amy

I'd like to go back a little bit, and explain how we, my siblings and I, came to learn of Sharks Tooth Island. My grandfather, Tony, who passed away in 1974, before I was born, had been hospitalized with pneumonia in Petersburg General Hospital in Petersburg, Virginia. The hospital was at full capacity so he was placed on the coronary floor. He was recovering quite nicely, soon to be released, when the unexpected occurred. According to my mother and father, who were at his bedside, he struggled to tell them something, but due to the tube in his throat and the lack of strength and energy to fight the obstruction, words were silent. What he was trying to express was an observation that death was near, and was not welcome and neither was the nurse's aid who had been checking in on him. This was no normal nurse's aid, but one with an agenda and a sick infatuation with a desire to communicate with the dead. He was called the "Angel of Death,"a moniker for an employed caregiver who kills people under their care.

Flat line after flat line was heard that day during the 'graveyard shift.' Throughout the hospital patients in intensive care were dying simultaneously. It was no coincidence and was unfortunately too late for my grandfather. By the time the devastating occurrences had registered, he had already passed at the age of 57.

Many people died that day. It became national news, but his death was claimed to be of natural causes on paper. No autopsy was ever performed to allow the dead to not be disrupted, even though the doctor recommended the body be exhumed, claiming that he believed he had been criminally assaulted. His heart stopped beating just like all the others simultaneously injected with a shot of lidocaine.

Tony's will was to be changed the Friday before he went into the hospital, leaving the river house to the children he never had, us.

Lee 'Roy' Hargrave Jr was convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to life in prison in 1975. After the court recessed, Hargrave overdosed in the bathroom on his mother's prescription medication and was rushed to the hospital, where he survived. In 2009 he was released from prison on parole after 35 years, and as of 2015 was reported to be living in Ashland, Virginia, just forty minutes from my mother. There is no record of him passing away as of yet.

After Tony's death, when I was a teenager, my father pulled out a lock box to show me the newspaper clippings of the incident, Tony's first dollar bill, which appeared double the size, and two big, beautiful shark teeth, that he still has to this day, from Sharks Tooth Island.

THE FIRE

BENEATH

My voice fills
blank pages with words of my grandmothers,
poems stashed away,
aged in cobwebs of the past
alive in present memories

She is everywhere

My sister's hands,
kind, and generous like hers
the same hands that held our mothers as a child,
hold on to aging years with care and love,
supporting the weight that once carried her
for nine months

They called her Daisy,
like my dog
Daisy May,
the same shade hair
a light strawberry,
delicate features,
pretty and loving like my mother,
my favorite flower and hers,
simple
pure
symbolic of rebirth

She is everywhere

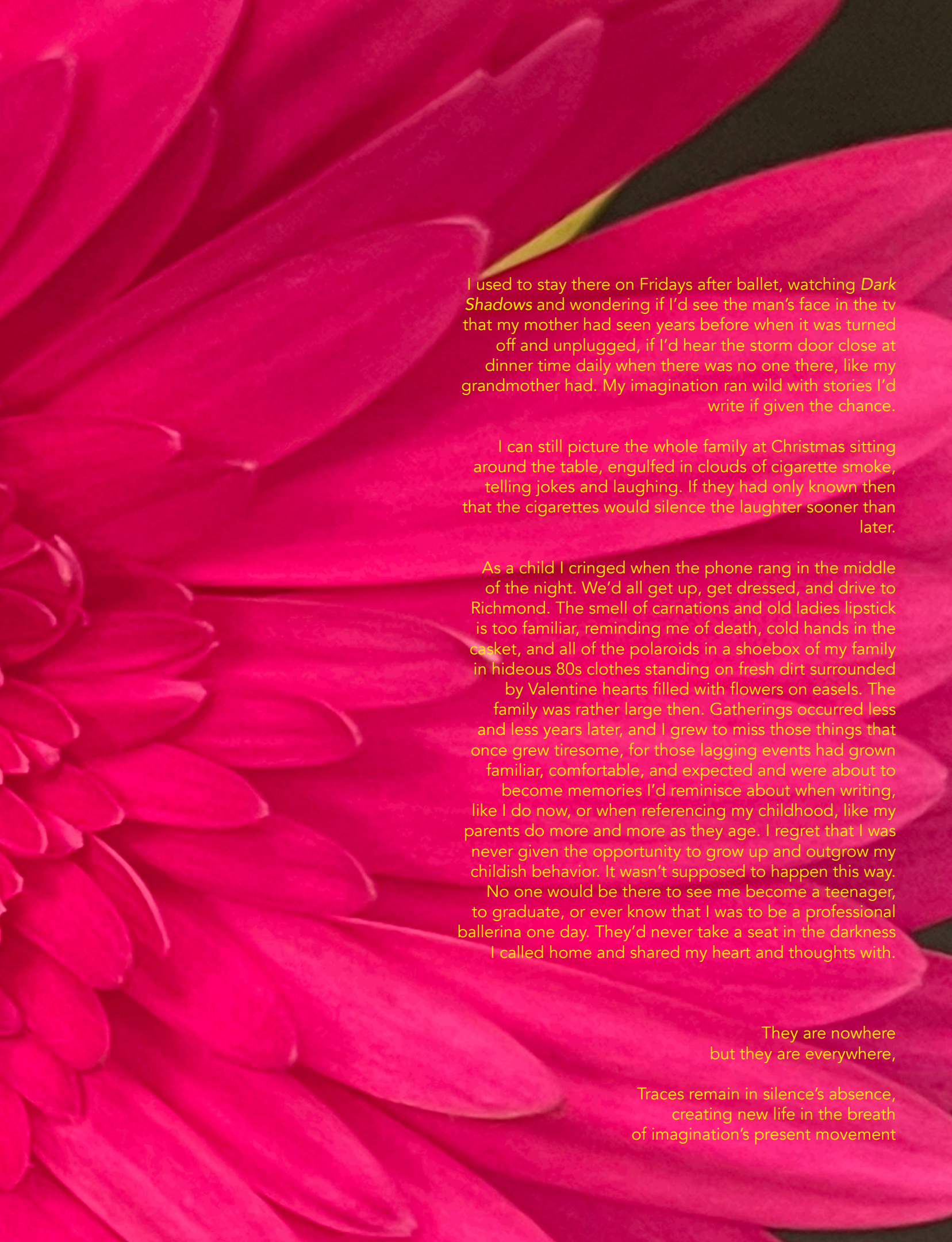
Apart of me
In my memories

In color

Pink, her favorite,
hugs the walls in a bedroom at home,
my mother's house,
holding her dresser with my sister's clothes

I remember it differently
a room with low ceilings
an ashtray filled with the mornings remnants
and hazy smoke left behind that lingered
in hair and clothes for days
The tapping of the metal chain of the ceiling
fan on low
the ticking of the cuckoo clock in the
background

There was no silence
There is no silence
The voices echo in the hallways of my mind



I used to stay there on Fridays after ballet, watching *Dark Shadows* and wondering if I'd see the man's face in the tv that my mother had seen years before when it was turned off and unplugged, if I'd hear the storm door close at dinner time daily when there was no one there, like my grandmother had. My imagination ran wild with stories I'd write if given the chance.

I can still picture the whole family at Christmas sitting around the table, engulfed in clouds of cigarette smoke, telling jokes and laughing. If they had only known then that the cigarettes would silence the laughter sooner than later.

As a child I cringed when the phone rang in the middle of the night. We'd all get up, get dressed, and drive to Richmond. The smell of carnations and old ladies lipstick is too familiar, reminding me of death, cold hands in the casket, and all of the polaroids in a shoebox of my family in hideous 80s clothes standing on fresh dirt surrounded by Valentine hearts filled with flowers on easels. The family was rather large then. Gatherings occurred less and less years later, and I grew to miss those things that once grew tiresome, for those lagging events had grown familiar, comfortable, and expected and were about to become memories I'd reminisce about when writing, like I do now, or when referencing my childhood, like my parents do more and more as they age. I regret that I was never given the opportunity to grow up and outgrow my childish behavior. It wasn't supposed to happen this way. No one would be there to see me become a teenager, to graduate, or ever know that I was to be a professional ballerina one day. They'd never take a seat in the darkness I called home and shared my heart and thoughts with.

They are nowhere
but they are everywhere,

Traces remain in silence's absence,
creating new life in the breath
of imagination's present movement

In M2

Memories

It's been awhile since afternoon tea with the sun,

and the neighborhood gossip is as juicy as blueberry jam dripping off warm scones

Birds sing with excitement

rambling on and on

with old friends

for a fleeting moment

beneath shaded tables raining crumbs,

a vocal competition with impatient mothers and their strollers

Runners sprint by with spring's lightness,

fingers combing through sun kissed highlights

that dance in the breath of a lullaby,

and the sky grows sleepy,

batting it's long lashes,

heavy lids blanketing cool eyes

with marshmallow fluff spread slowly

as warmth fades into the shadows of yesterday,

and today licks the last drippings

from fruit punch popsicles

that stain a child's face like a spreading rash

My favorite dress,

popsicle green seersucker with vanilla stripes

embroidered with a red apple invaded by a worm,

hung short on youthful sticks in white tights

and Buster Brown shoes

Brown pigtails flopped over mousy ears,

skipping along the bumpy familiar road traveled

with the rebellious cowlick butting in between bangs cut straight

Weekend trips to Richmond were common and irritating. An hour in the backseat with my two siblings teasing me, a window cracked, and a brown paper bag at arm's length with the sour smell of vomit covered with orange powder on the elementary school carpet, set up camp in our nostrils. Carsickness plagued me for years,

but freed up the front seat with a cold soda

whose fizz brought tears to my eyes and tickled my nose.

A visit with my maternal great grandparents was worth every dry heave, and the truth is, I'd have preferred weekends with them on the roll away cot than with anyone else.

In a building with no elevator,

we climbed many flights,

greenish gray rubbery stairs

muffled the echo of anxious tiny feet

The smell of reused grocery bags

holding fresh produce of

tomatoes, lettuce and celery

lingered in the heat of summer's unventilated stairwell,

a scent that continues to remind me of the times I spent with them, just the 3 of us.

Big Nanny and Big Granddaddy, I called them, hurried to the door with Barnum and Bailey animal cookies in a box with a string handle, green grapes freshly washed in a cool, damp paper towel, and Cheetos that had already stained the napkin like my fingers by evening. We had only just arrived and yet I longed for the moment when the others departed, and I had them all to myself. That's when the true spoiling would begin, an evening of reading from my favorite book of silly poems, dancing, fashion shows of her latest purchases, not to mention the butter pecan ice cream float with Coca Cola from a can, foamy and full of ice crystals that floated on top like a shaken martini. Visits were magical, as were her delicate hands with long bony fingers with knots of arthritis, intriguing and witchy, that entranced an active imagination as well as the loving eyes of her husband. I adored her. I adored them both and aspired to be just like her and tried to emulate her in so many ways. I danced for them in the living room. I clogged when they asked, shy and embarrassed, as the family stood staring and cheering me on. I was humiliated, but I did it anyway because it made them happy, and I loved them. As far as my mother is concerned, she is very much alive and present within me, and as long as I walk this earth she will never die, "Audrey."

Doors swing outward to a balcony saturated with tears after the

stormy night's heated

argument

Flowers peer over the metal railing above,

take a bow and giggle,

making faces as they admire their beauty in puddles

Today is full,

full of clarity and possibility

Wholeness reveals itself,

removing the cloudy veil of uncertainty that shadowed me for

days

Azure blue,

limitless,

endless,

hovers and flirts with the street below,

the one I reside on that has no name,

the place I rest and leave alone day after day,

neglected and ignored like a dog in a window awaiting my return

And return I do,

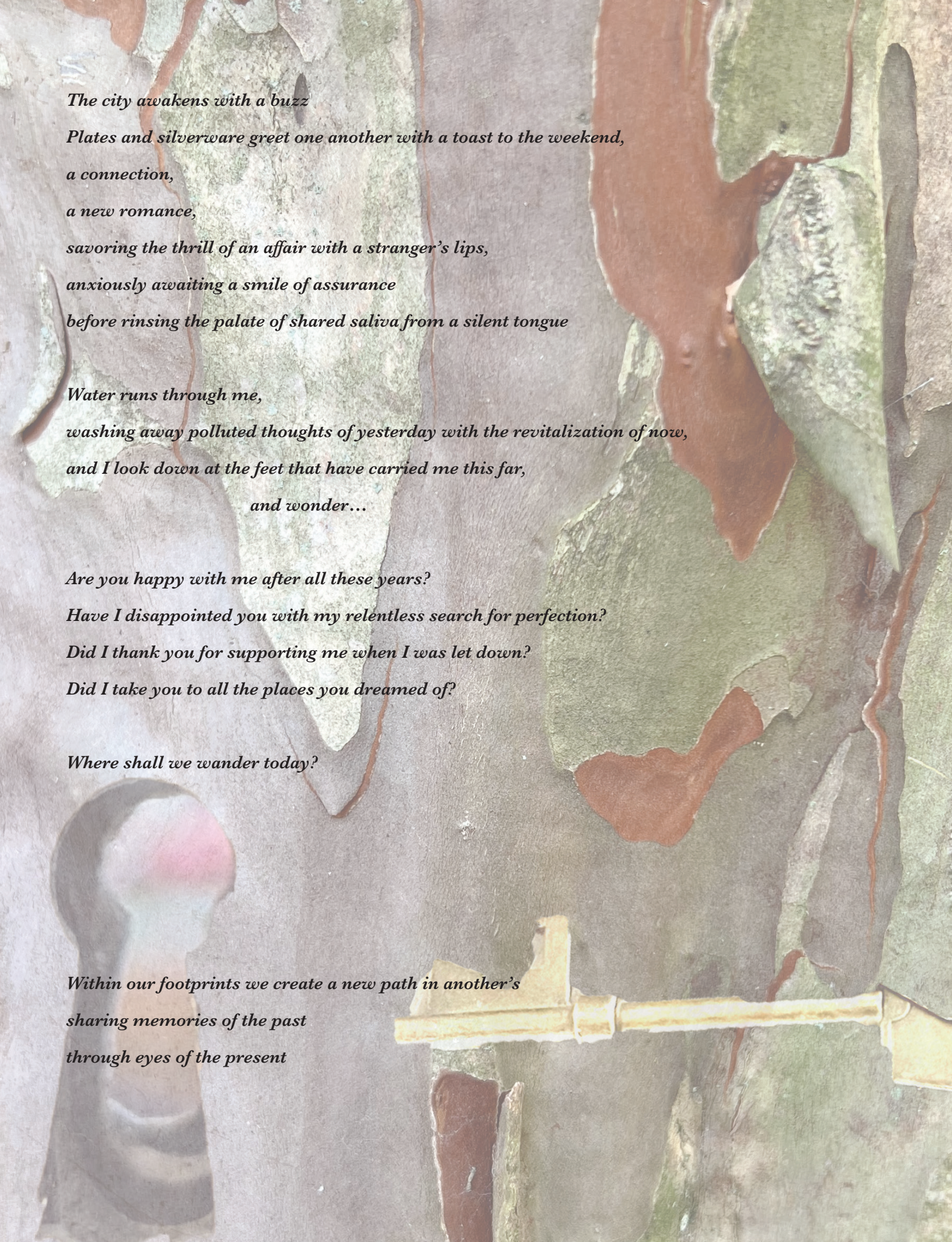
evening after evening

like freshly brewed coffee hitching a ride on a breeze,

knocking on my window,

and tickling my nose with Eskimo kisses each morning,

reminding me of home



The city awakens with a buzz
Plates and silverware greet one another with a toast to the weekend,
a connection,
a new romance,
savoring the thrill of an affair with a stranger's lips,
anxiously awaiting a smile of assurance
before rinsing the palate of shared saliva from a silent tongue

Water runs through me,
washing away polluted thoughts of yesterday with the revitalization of now,
and I look down at the feet that have carried me this far,
and wonder…

Are you happy with me after all these years?
Have I disappointed you with my relentless search for perfection?
Did I thank you for supporting me when I was let down?
Did I take you to all the places you dreamed of?

Where shall we wander today?

Within our footprints we create a new path in another's
sharing memories of the past
through eyes of the present

All that we see or seem

is but a dream within a dream...[1]

Beside me

feathers tickle

the stillness of morning

accepting the dare of a sneaky whisper

through a window's parted lips,

where I sit in the wingback

that holds my waking body

with the softness of velvet

and belonging

My heavy head still full from last night's dinner

finds comfort on the back of an old love

raising from familiar support

to sip on the warmth of coffee's enthusiasm

and stare, lost in a thought

aware of the moment

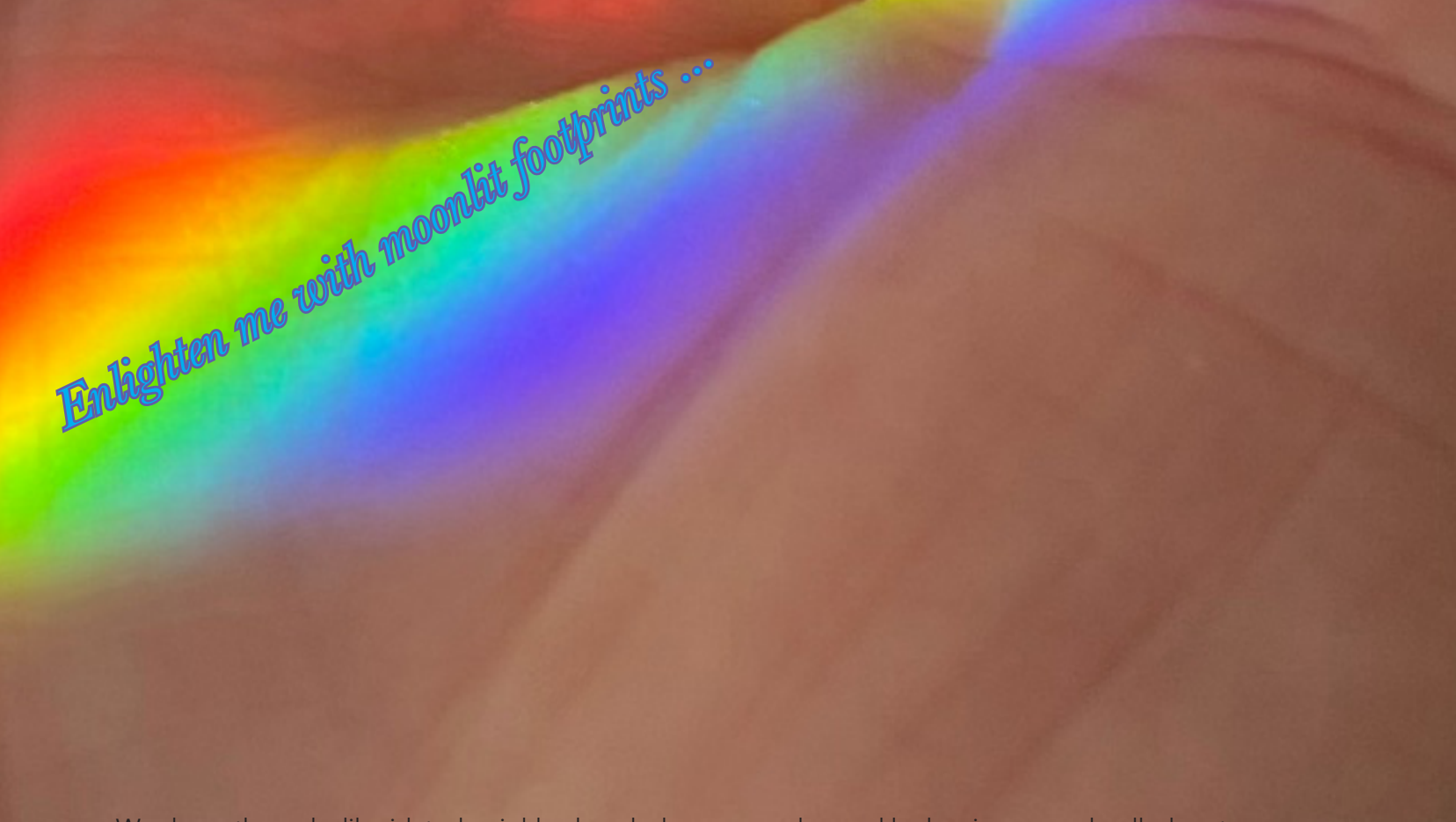
that today

is mine

Once a year my family gathers in near totality to celebrate the Christmas holiday. All but my father. The invitation is never extended, and grudges from many years ago hold strong as faded memories repeat like a broken record in my mother's mind. A reminder that our perceptions of time are quite different, for some of us it stands still, and for others, the aging heart counts down.

It seems like yesterday I was holding my nephew, Christian, in my arms looking out at the Potomac River while visiting our River House, and here I am on an airplane to New Orleans for his engagement party. I remember as a child being told that one day you'll blink and another year will pass. Time waits for no one.

A silver car passes by, new and shiny, replaced by that which was stolen during Covid, torn apart, like hands from an instrument separated and silenced. Inside I see a familiar profile, brown wavy hair and a pair of glasses. We've arrived together, he and I, in sync as usual. Familiar arms tower from above, outstretched and engulfed my petite frame. He'd grown, matured with scattered grays throughout his chestnut brown hair and become such a handsome young man, but the smile and twinkle in his eyes is the same as the young child that always seemed more like a brother than a nephew.



We drove through dilapidated neighborhoods, homes condemned by hurricanes and pulled up to a green house, typical of New Orleans, enclosed by a black wrought iron la fleur-de-lis fence, part repainted, and the other weathered by the hurricanes that brought the young lovers together and shifted them uphill out of the flood zone. They called it a shotgun house, one that you could walk straight through, narrow and long with all the rooms connected and doors to close them off. Delicate hands, those of a musician, opened the gate and led the way inside of a recent purchase, a first home for a big step in life as a soon to be husband.

The ceilings soared above original windows layered with white paint and screens so thick they could weather anything. The floors were old, wide planks of dark wood that snagged your socks if you dragged your feet and had small gaps where blades of grass could be seen through old subflooring. It was an older house with a new kitchen, maintaining the painted olive green cabinets, updated electric, and held the energy of the small child that filled my heart. The walls held many paintings, two of which I recognized, gifted to me and now to him. The time had come for those paintings to find a new home with a new message that would hopefully inspire another artist as they inspired me. Alongside my paintings were those of a mother-in- law to be, another artist, a painter, that would join my family and create many new memories.

The sound of a train passing in the night is white noise to those that roamed there, placing pennies on the tracks, reflecting history in the blur of time's repetitive stutter

Rewind Time

GUESTS &
MEMBERS ONLY

I carry you not in this pocket with a whole,
for I lost you too many years ago

You slipped away on a spring's eve
following blank thoughts
that ran away with our names

gone with the cool breath
that nestled in and held you
with anxious hands
erasing all traces,
gone with the magic
and those who embraced
your inner power,
relying on hopes of remembrance
to bring you back

I carry you not in this pocket with a
whole,
but keep you close

held by silver
on a bureau
you rest,
you and the lucky bean
that holds my thumb from time to time

in the dimple of luck,
embracing the magic
carried in your pocket without a hole
so many years ago

The Lucky bean is 104 yrs old, found at the age of 5 by my paternal grandmother on Lee Avenue in Virginia. She passed in 1992 of Alzheimer's related issues, unaware of the names of any family members including my father who cared for her near our house for many years.

Home,

where the hairline cracks, like sparse grays,

glisten through squinted blinds, more noticeable in passing time,

and the floorboards struggle to grab hold

of the marble gifted to me last summer.

The bones are settling quickly,

leaning to the left

ever so gently rocking in the breeze of decisions unknown,

a trajectory in limbo.

Twigs snapped beneath white bedazzled Keds
shimmering in the sunlight that peered
through the leaves of the wise oak trees.

Like fireworks
zigzags of pink and white crystals I'd punched into canvas
darted down the sledding hill
now overgrown with the
wildness of summer's hair and honeysuckle,
twinkling sparklers
racing against time.

The lingering secrets from the walls of the treehouse
built by my siblings,
wallpapered and carpeted with old scraps from home,
echoed in the leave's breath,
waving farewell to memories past through a broken window,
as I crossed the fallen tree that offered its back
like a cloak for a lady on a rainy day,
across a shallow creek
I waded in from time to time
gathering tadpoles in Mason jars.

I could see in the distance the pennies we'd placed on the railroad tracks,
now flattened and scattered across the gravel,
fallen coins on the ocean floor,
a treasure of gold luring the fish,
calling me closer with Morse code
as the sun played peek a boo with dwindling time.

The woods, a mystical playground

an escape from reality,

presented possibilities and new adventures.

The underpass, the attraction to darkness *or light I should say light,*

was the bridge home, *the time tracker that befriended me,*

left me alone,

frozen in the present time *with memories of lost magic.*

It was unclear how I'd gotten there, and unclear where I was, but it was the same each time,

the same path, the same place, the same view .

The sky,

a constant sunset of pink and orange sherbet on a sweltering day,

The waterfall,

clear without confusion,

gossiping nonstop *babbling on and on,*

reading tarot cards and tea leaves *and stealing wishes from visiting dreamers,*

my landmark,

the way in *the way out,* *spit coins of rejected wishes.*

A boat on mirrored water, *a reminder* *a reflection of truth,*

ceasing the repetitive cycle.

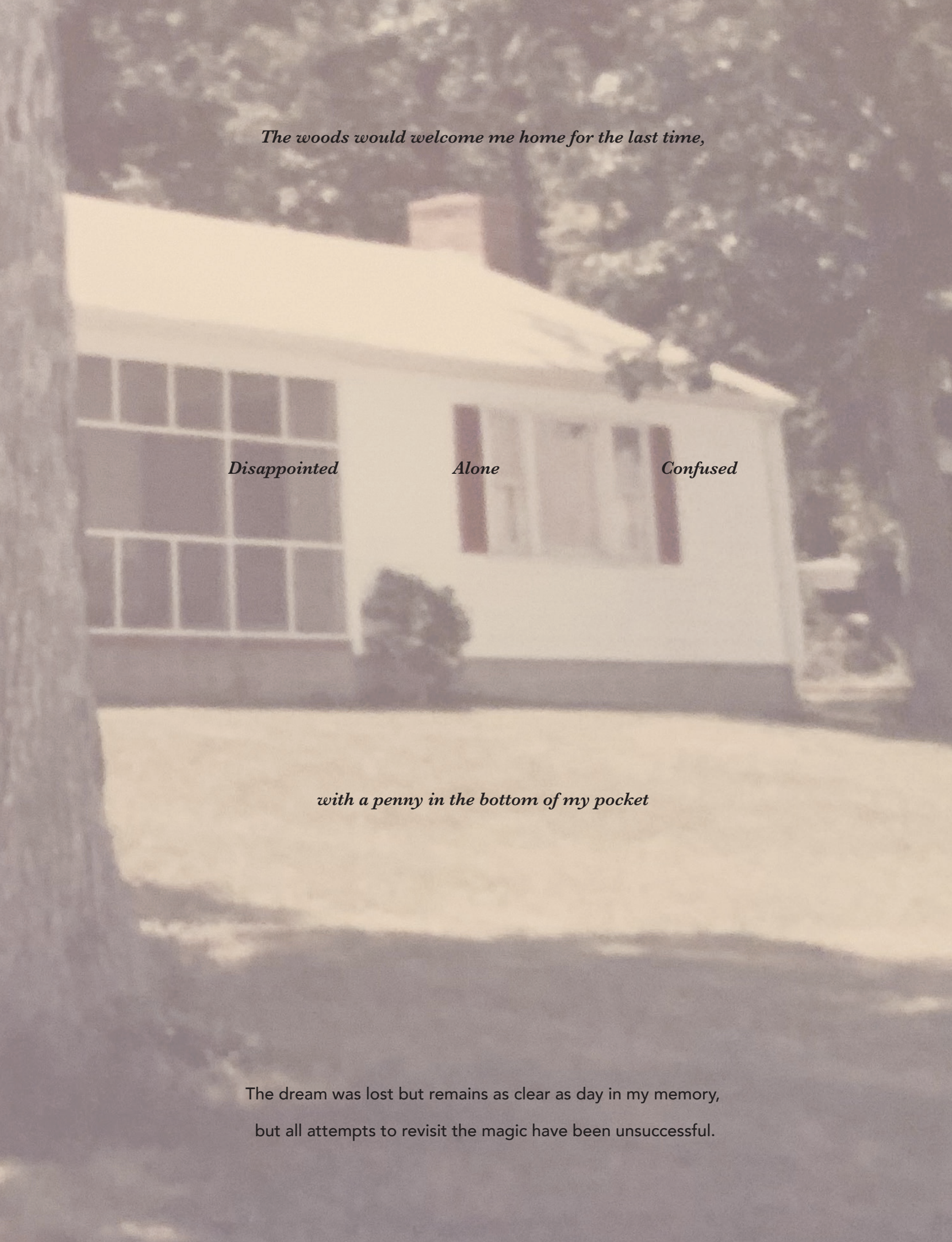
The cards had been dealt

the waterfall run dry *a back turned,*

a relationship severed, *rejected,*

dissolved by purpose served *enlightenment*

received



The woods would welcome me home for the last time,

Disappointed *Alone* *Confused*

with a penny in the bottom of my pocket

The dream was lost but remains as clear as day in my memory,

but all attempts to revisit the magic have been unsuccessful.

Images

In Order of Appearance

Front and Back Cover, Photographer, Loni Landon

Introduction Hands, Photographer, Loni Landon

Acknowledgments, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

Table of Contents, Photographer, Loni Landon

What Lies Beneath, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

Sharks Tooth Island, Left to Right: Amy, Kim, Christian, Bob Lucy, Photographer, unknown

Sharks Teeth from the Island, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

River House with Family, Format by Amy Aldridge

River House, Left to Right: Paternal Grandparents with Jerry Aldridge, Format by Amy Aldridge

River House Kitchen, Christian as a baby, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

Amy in the Sea, Photographer, Loni Landon

Sharks Teeth with Amy at the River House in the Snow, Photographer, Jerry Aldridge (1994)

River House in Winter, Photographer, Amy Aldridge (1994)

Rittenhouse Square with Tony Sparacino Men's Price Tag, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

Aunt Linda with Amy Aldridge, Photographer Unknown

Ocean, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

Nanny Hanks and Granddaddy Hanks, Photographer unknown

Gerber Daisy, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

Palm of Hand, Format by Amy Aldridge

Leaf with Rain, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

Thibodaux, Louisiana Pond, photographer, Amy Aldridge

Big Nanny and Big Granddaddy, Photographer unknown

Cherry Blossoms Bradford Alley, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

Peeling Tree, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

Sunset Turks and Caicos, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

Academy of Music, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

Inside a Diamond with Fire, Photographer of Diamond, unknown, Sunset, Amy Aldridge

Rainbow Prisms on Palm, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

Pond at Louisiana Sunset, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

The Columns Restaurant, New Orleans, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

Lucky Bean, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

Childhood Home, Format by Amy Aldridge

Fabric in the Sea, Montpellier, Photographer, Loni Landon

Amy's Eye, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

River House, Photographer unknown

Memmy's Memories Journal, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

The Secret of My Name, Photographer, Amy Aldridge

Memories on Fire, Format by Amy Aldridge

Images, Format by Amy Aldridge

Door, Artist, James Hering, Format, Amy Aldridge

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Endnotes

1 Edgar Allan Poe