



Pointed Words

Natalia Marshall

A sorrow threads through the sea draft, it's potent, and lingers as it always seems to. I live at the water. The ripples dissolve into each other, my reflected form shimmers. Fleeting sand piles under me. It's a late hour, but no one waits for my arrival. I watch the birds land on the sea wall, it towers over the Spanish water. Doves and crows arrive and depart, but tonight my eyes meet a white crane.

A rare occurrence this is, I sit here most nights and have never seen a crane. We watch each other watch the water. I feel compelled to approach its still presence. Seashells crack under my naked feet as I walk towards it. Bottles roll over the rocks. Chiming sounds fill our silence. The crane's stillness remains. I stand under its throne of a wall. The glowing creature watches me from above. Our eyes swirl into each other. Suddenly the crane extends its white wings, blinding the moonlight for lasting seconds. It soars down to face me and eventually speaks out,

"Come with me."

I stare in astonishment at its telling beak.

"Where?"

"Where you're meant to be."

The crane's pointed words hold some sort of truth. I trust my fortune and climb onto its feathers. Though I'm small, the crane's strength stuns me. We leap off the shells and sail through mist. My supple skin

turns frigid. The crane nose dives to glide over the wild waves.

“Tell me where we’re going.”

We fly for minutes before the crane answers my demand.

“Where you’re meant to be. Do you wish for me to return you?”

I wonder for some time before answering the crane. I’m met with visions of my forlorn past. I glance behind to regard the departing town. The passing clouds reveal the sea wall I spend sorrowful nights.

“No. I don’t. There isn’t anything to miss. I prayed every night for some sort of escape. How’d you know?”



“Know what?”

“To take me away from my old life?”

“Though I’m taking you away, it’s not in permanence. This night is to provide you with a necessary change of perspective. I believe you’re meant to be with me tonight.”

The crane’s milky wings flap into my disillusioned conscious. We approach an island. As we land, acres of olive trees fill my vision. Bright leaves drape down to meet the grass. Though the island is magical, it’s not practical nor far enough from my past. I face the crane.

“You must take me somewhere farther than this. Take me some place I can surely survive.”

The crane indulges in the fallen olives, the salty juice trickles down its beak.

“Young human, why are you so persistent to leave your life behind? There are surer times to do so. We must axe your tree and look into it’s roots. What occurred for you to believe you’re treading alone in the sea? I can be of your help, but to assist you in returning back to your presence.”

A tear traces my jaw.

“I’m alone...don’t you get it? You may be of knowledge, but you don’t gather my tribulations as a human. Lonesome hours have whispered



nothing but agony to my fresh ears. I’m caged there. You’re my key at a better life.”

“Though I’m a crane, I can tell you we float down this stream of life together. Your eyes are blind to this intertwining connection. You can go far, but you can’t escape yourself.”

I turn away from the crane's unconvincing eyes. I drag my feet through the grass. I find myself at a rock facing the town. The crane flies to accompany me.

"Please take me away... I don't have capabilities for connection. The gates of my heart have been shut long ago. I'm no instrument of love, that just isn't me... I'm not sure what I did in my past to deserve it. I wish I was one of you...I would fly into the sun and never look back."

We sit in a sad silence until the crane responds.

"Believe me when I say I do too know the silence of the night. I also know we're equal to experience the freshness of morning tide. Maybe I'm naive. I don't have the same life as you. I will never understand in fullness the complexities you face, but you don't see the blockages you've created for yourself. You must attempt to walk the fields of joy before fleeting. You'll continue to fleet until you meet yourself."

The crane brings me into a feathery embrace. I feel warmth.

"Realize you've already opened your gates. When we met, you opened yourself to meet me at the sea wall. If you didn't approach me, we wouldn't be here. You must continue to do this throughout your days. Approach and discover. Feel yourself and all your complexities, let them flow through you like rain. I'll tell you this, to any sorrow, hurt, and question; there's almost always a simple answer. You must love it. Never lose the will to love. Sometimes it's hard to find, but this life is meant for only such. When the sun shines don't neglect it's rays, feel them with your totality. When someone knocks at your universal door, let them in. Don't hide. Don't let your fear drive you mad. Don't forget to eat from the open fruits of life. There are cracks everywhere, but light can always shine through, even when you believe all is shattered. Someday you will depart from the town, but try to love first; then your true purpose will reveal itself."

The crane's words reveal a power in me. A liberating emotion I'm swarmed in, love cradles my skin. I haven't been told words like these before. In this moment I don't feel the breaking separateness I've spent my days consumed in. The night wind whistles a tune, I release my eyes into the sea as it plunges towards the rocks. My heart has burst and beat again. We watch the night depart. Eventually the crane tells me,

"You know you can't stay here. I must return you."

I slowly nod and climb onto it's feathers. We depart from the island and soar into the morning tide the crane spoke of. A promising smile I give the blush sun. I feel certainty I'll never forget this moment, it'll exist through my entirety.

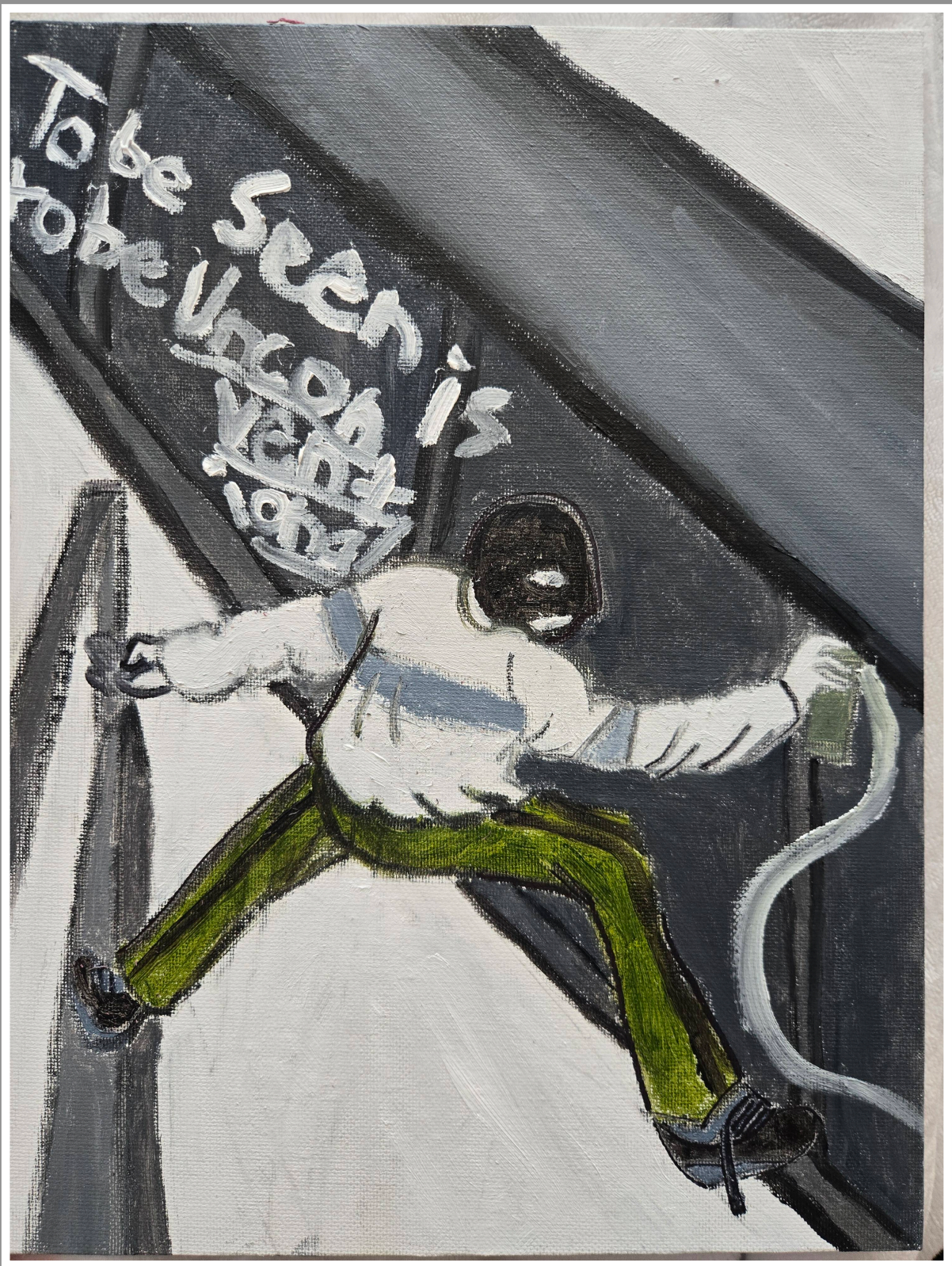
We arrive at the sea wall. My feet press onto the shells. I face the crane once more. It's a love felt strongest before separating.

“Our day of parting shall too be my day of loving.”

The cranes eyes fill mine with a lasting stillness. It extends it's ethereal feathers before leaping into the morning tide. I face my town. I'm met with a windfall of words:

“I'm where I'm meant to be.”





a cappella

Albert Hwang

In a cab in Kaohsiung, the driver heard my dad's accent and switched from Mandarin to Taigi. He asked about us. *Mother, Taiwan, America, home, funeral* — I watched as my dad tried to traverse an old country. The driver said something about a song and began to sing. *A cappella*. Just his voice, lonely in the air. And the moped horns. When he finished, my dad said *buē-phái* which I'd never heard him say before. It means “pretty good.” Dad told me the driver wrote that song himself. He didn't understand all the lyrics (his tongue was old in the old country). But it was about love and distance, and it was sad. *A cappella*. We think this means without instruments. Actually it means, “in the style of a chapel.” Taigi has always had this sound to me. Echoing and warm, muffled and distant, sacred.

The Breach

Pat Carella

“No, no, no! The Brambly Hedge pieces come with us, not the gorillas. They’ll smash them.”

Lily taped the last box and handed it to Stephan.

Soon, the mover’s truck would push down I-87—everything he owned shifting in their aluminum cage.

He rubbed the raised scar on his elbow.

Sean McGinty—second-story fire escape.

Reggie Jackson was better than Harmon Killebrew.

Mary pulling him up. She wore a scoliosis brace.

Now they were gone—Mary, David, George, Teg, even Sean.

Different buildings. Different fire escapes.

“Don’t be sad, Stevie. I told you to do a New York bucket list. I walked around the lake at Bear Mountain. Went skating at Murray’s for the last time.”

“You wanted Katz’s.”

“Katz’s ships. I’m not waiting half an hour to get in.”

“It’s not the same city anymore.”

They passed a rest stop—Carvel, the sign was sun-faded.

The A/C hadn’t kicked in yet. His legs stuck to the car’s vinyl seats.

It took him back to summers in his father’s truck.

“I don’t know why we didn’t get leather,” Lily said, smiling.

“She doesn’t know a lot of things,” he thought.

The car hummed. Stephan checked the fuel gauge.

Lily wasn’t dropping it.

“How about a football game at West Point?”

He tightened his grip on the steering wheel.

“What about the Jets? Didn’t you want to go to a Jet game?”

“They’re cursed.”

“Look at the bright side—you’ll have a team down there. The Carolina Panthers.”

“Fuck the Panthers.”

He thought of Mary. He thought about her New York Jets.

“You’re out, Stephano. I just hit you.”

“You did not. It just skinned me.”

“It touched you.”

“So? It has to hit you to count.”

“Neener neener neener, Stephano’s a big fat weiner.”

Mary ran off toward the A&P.

“C’mon, Steph, you know the ball hit you.”

“But, Dad...”

“Let’s go, son. Mommy made perciatelli tonight.
C’mon, we’ll go for Carvel later.”

They disappeared inside the building.



He crossed the street. The building looked smaller.

“Steph, what are you doing?”

He didn’t answer.

“You want to go inside? For what?” she said. “We don’t have time for this.”

“Steph,” she said. “Come on.”

The fire escape was still there.

Higher than he remembered.

Fourth floor.

“Who are you even looking for?”

He didn’t answer.

He smelled sofrito.

Then, nothing.

A woman came out carrying groceries. He held the door.

“Thanks.”

She didn’t look at him.

“Mary?” he said.

The door shut behind her.

He put his hand to the brick.

Warm.

Not the same.

He tried the door. Locked.

He stepped back. Looked at the whole thing.

The Courts.

Uniforms. Old dumbwaiters.

Nothing left.

Even the woods, gone.

Only the building remained.

The door survived. Same glass.

He kicked it in once. His father made him pay for it.

He studied the sea of buzzers.

“Who is it?”

“Hi—you don’t know me, but I used to live here. Can I—”

Cut off.

He tried another.

“Hi. I used to live in 4B. Think you could—”

“I can see you down there. I’m calling the police.”

He walked back to the car.

“I’m going to the hardware store. I need to pick up something.”

“What do you need?”

“Rope.”

He didn’t look at her. “Rope? For what?”

The hardware store smelled the same.

The hawser was thick, sharp—it hurt his hands

He dragged a length of it to the Subaru. Closed the hatch.

He looked up at the building.

“Steph, don’t.”

He didn't answer.

He pulled the rope tight.

“Steph, stop. What are you doing?”

Around his waist. Twice. The Swiss seat held.

“C'mon Steph. It's raining.”

He pressed the elevator button.

The car hummed the same tune.

He got off at six and took the stairs to the roof—tar beach.

He swung the rope around a ventilator pipe and dropped down the face of the building to the fourth floor—his body pressed to brick.

He patted its side.

“It knows me.”

He reached for the window sill and steadied himself.

Wind and rain stung his skin.

Steadying himself on the wet sill, he drove his hand through the leaded glass.

The smell hit him first—garlic sizzling.

Home.

He savored it for a second.

Then the odors behind other doors—

Mothballs. Boiled cabbage. Hot grease from the elevator cables.

The body odor of a 96-year-old building.

The jolt threw him off the brick—then slammed him back.

The building heaved under his chest.

He held on. Brine was on his lips.

Mortar burst from the joints and pelted his face—

the rope cut into his waist—

his body pulled with it. The building’s skeleton twisted.

“From hell’s heart... I hold,” he shouted—it came out of him without thinking.



“Lash me tighter, red-clayed beast.

I’m not coming off this.”

Wind in his face. Grit in his teeth.

The building bucked. He held tighter.

Bricks juttred and scraped his forearms—

Police and a crowd gathered below.

“Steph! Steph! Come down! Please!”

Lily looked up as the building swayed.

Safety nets were deployed.

“I’m bound to it now.

No cutting free,” he held onto the broken window pane.

Police reached for him from the adjacent apartment.

The building dove down.

“Steph!”

“Hey, Stephano! Stephano! Get down from there!”

A girl called from the benches.

“Stephano! My dad’s gonna kill you!”

Mary. The super’s daughter.

“What are you doing up there?

He slid down, hands raw.

She smiled.

Levi’s. Retainer. Scoliosis brace.

“Did you see Ronnie’s tattoo? He’s home from the Navy.”

Ronnie?

Who the hell is Ronnie?

“It’s a big eagle. It’s on his arm. He calls it a ‘tatt.’ ”

Ronnie. Teg’s brother.

“C’mon Stephie. Let’s play dodge ball. I’ll let you win.”

She pushed the buzzer.

He looked for Lily.

She was gone.



Keep Trying

Gali Tym

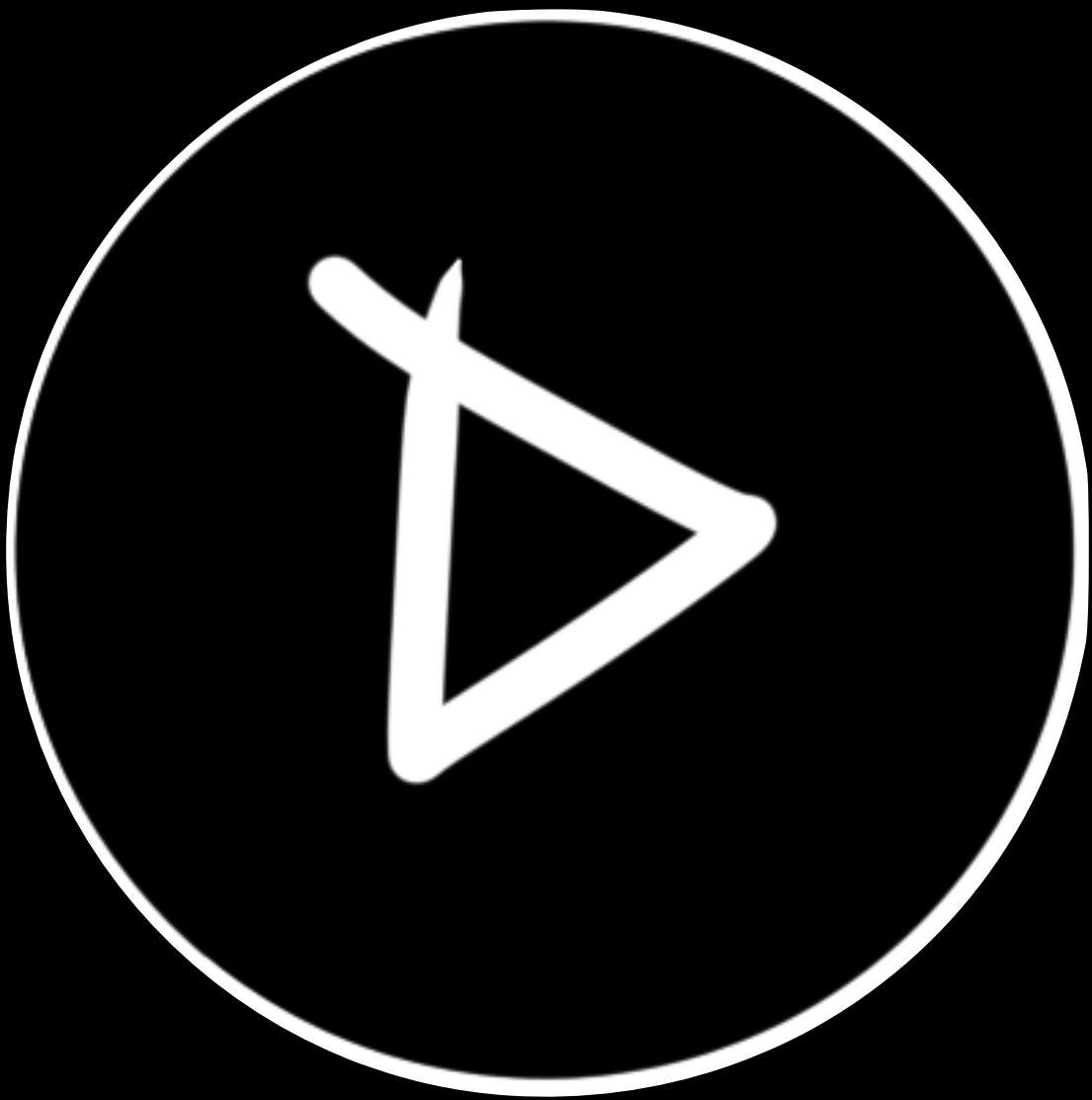
We keep trying,
Yet I keep falling.
Something must be wrong with me—
Yet every test says I'm healthy.

The one thing my heart longs for most
Remains just out of reach.
Test after test,
Check after check—
Each answer whispers,
"Everything is fine."

But if that's true,
Then why this empty space?

Why do some who never wanted it
Hold what they never had to seek,
While those who ache, who pray, who dream,
Are left with silent hearts to keep?

We keep trying.
I keep hoping.
Even when hope feels heavy,
I still reach for tomorrow.



url: minimag.press
subs: minimagsubmissions@gmail.com
substack: minimag.substack.com
twitter: @minimag_lit
insta: @minimag_write
book: <https://a.co/d/8bTfxxI>

Art and Photography by Vantage
ARG: <https://conform.edgeone.dev/>
Insta: @_vge.archive_
Website: <https://vantagepix.wordpress.com/>

“Pointed Words” by Natalia Marshall

“a cappella” by Albert Hwang
Insta: @move.albie.move

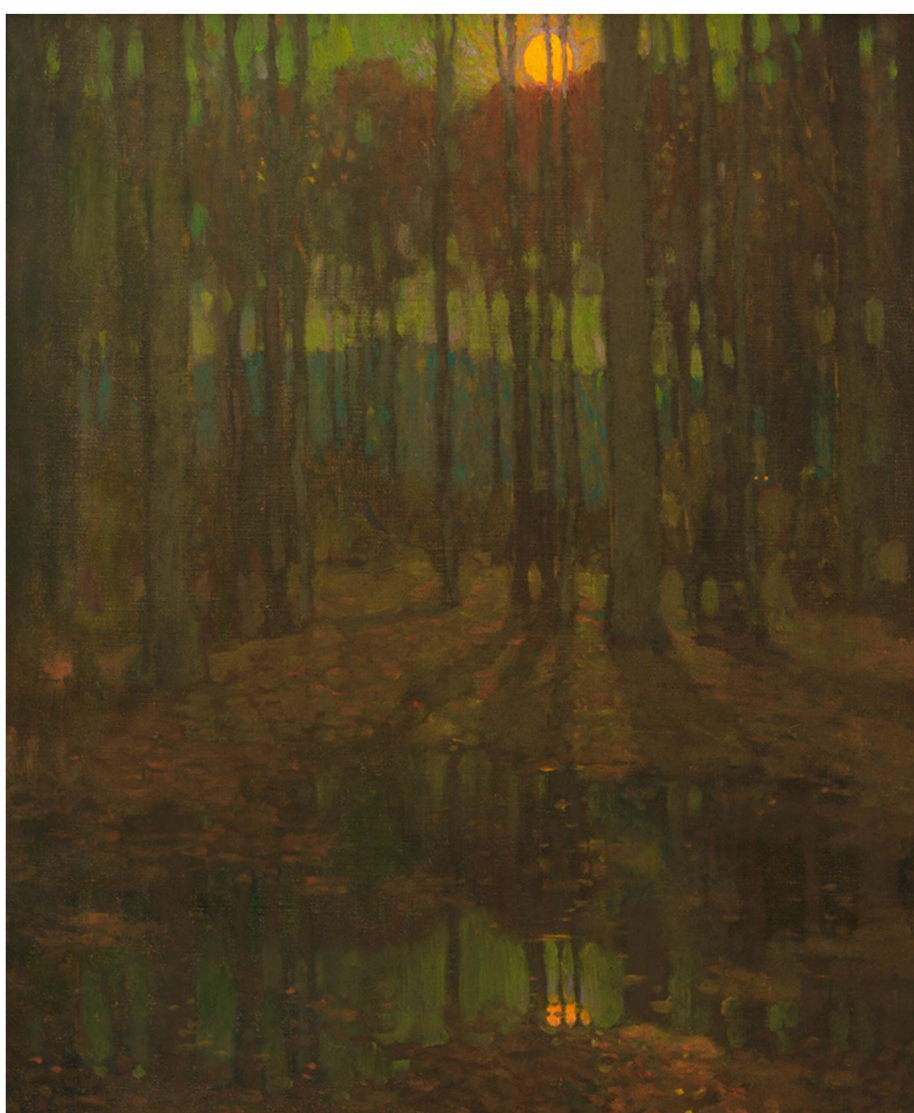
“The Breach” by Pat Carella
Website: <https://www.patcarella.com/>

“Keep Trying” by Gali Tym
Insta: @galitym

ISSUE223 edited by airport

ads

F O R E S T S O F W O U N D E D N E S S



P O E M S

J A N W I E Z O R E K

[click here](#)
(amazon)

ads

Chill Subs

Browse

Features

Community

About

For Editors

SLUSHPILE

Support us

Log in

Sign up

Get published.
Promote your work.
Grow as a creative.

(All without having a mental breakdown)

Log in

Sign up

We list 4134 submission opportunities for writers, 1478 for artists, with 1188 contests and a community of 9080 creators who've tracked 31249 submissions. We've been around 443 days and there's plenty more on the way.

See all statistics →

We're building a submissions manager!

Learn more

[click here](#)
(website)