YOU ARE WISE NOW
Sunny Nagpal

The chill in my bedroom pulls me from sleep before the morning sunlight breaks through the clouds. Rain taps blue fingers, trip trap, on my attic room too old and ill-suited for Vermont winter nights. Besides me, Wes lies face down, his heavy head of curls falling with each breath, lost in sleep and delusions.

I inch closer to the warmth surrounding his body, carefully so I won’t wake him as he is still a stranger, and the skin on my arm glows and sparkles. Outside, street lights glint like flames against the pale city the way maybe this stranger and I lit candles against the pale blue lake.

I’ve seen Burlington sheathed in this berry shade before and I’ve wanted to leave it. To close the book halfway, is now the time to celebrate? The rain, trip trap, comes to honor us but hardly creeps above a whisper. I dream that it is summoning me from a perfect blue place. It would be lovely to listen to the trapping of the rain, to trust its voice as steady and gentle as any mentor’s, but I shiver and pull my comforter tight over my neck, and beg the rain to leave with its counsel. The rain’s place does not exist. The perfect promised land is just glorified fog.

It ceases without frills, fading its siren son until there is only the shallow breath of this stranger snoring and a swarm of nausea rising high in my chest. The clouds outside clear a path of chilled light down to me, almost as if to say You saw right through me! You are wise now, and my tongue feels too big for my mouth. The mist thickens rapidly, glazing the city and perfectly preserving Burlington’s silhouette like Pompeii in blueberry jam.

The street lights flare like sparklers, commanding the ceremony of wisdom to commence, as I peel over the side of the bed and hang my mouth two inches from the floor. The blue city howls with cheers as a long glob of saliva, resplendently bathed in watery, angelic light, consumes a small bead of my carpet floor with its ceremonial slime.