

## Heatseeker

A shift of latitude turns the land to face the sun, and with it the ocean's steel face softens and expands. The quickening progression of lengthening days unfolds into unbridled growth in all directions, and the forest is lush, impenetrable. Everywhere, the rush towards the inevitable crush of coming heat.

Suddenly, summer's overwhelming gape. Trout lilies at my feet, a blossoming carpet. Peonies, lavish, embarrassing, undone. On warm nights, meteor showers, mollusk feasting, ice ringing in glasses, bonfires, laughter. A thunderclap, and the sprint for cover in a sudden rush of limbs and lawn furniture. Floating through warm nights, falling asleep to the old mast stays rattling their lullaby chorus. Deep, unforgiving heat and its insistent withering of agency, wringing us all into submission, sending us to the water.

Into the quarries, from ledge-tops pock-marked with old dynamite holes and rusting iron fixtures, littered with stone slivers and granite flakes. Their edges diffused, revealing turquoise slabs, submerged stone stairways, Atlantis-like. On their surfaces waterbugs impossibly poised, and violet green swallows arching, gulping flies. Sometimes a mute swan hovers at the far side, an apparition. In their centers, obdurate jade-black, the fates of old cars, drowned tourists. Exchange students, hundreds of yards out, surprised, taken under by sudden cramps, cold. Softened over the decades at their edges, ringed with wintergreen, tufted grasses, saplings, blueberries. Here and there sleeping bathers, babies, teenagers leaping into the void, rickety grandfathers whose bodies, when submerged, move with the ease of children. Whole stands of thick-leafed lady slippers, fleshy petals flaming pink, their white lips curved, beckoning the bees into a pollenless, rose-glowing ganzfeld.

Our bodies washed clean of salt, resting on sun-warmed platforms, the song of uncatchable bullfrogs, each call an echo in your diaphragm, loud as a reverberating drum. The old stone office, windows wider than your outstretched arms and taller than all of us, glass long ground to nothing, frames rotted away into soil, the old pavers slowly claimed by leaf litter and moss. Two young maple trees grow up through the floor like dead, risen lovers, beneath the ceiling long gone, toward a view of the sky. Rushing home before the onslaught of mosquitos, along the edge of the meadow at the top of the hill, through the turkey woods, where dappled pools of falling light merge into the shadowy expanses of the lesser motions, and flushing darkness.

Writing by Elizabeth Russell presented in conjunction with her exhibition, *Heatseeker*, Interface Gallery, April/May 2018.