

Nicholas Martino

Alone with Insects

Never mind what I remember
Swimming Ethan's saltwater pool.

Never mind blue beveled edges,
Jumper's glory, risking nothing.

Never mind my swim trunks dripping
Bootleg shadows fast to my feet.

It drizzled for five minutes straight today
As I stood outside and said *This is it*,

Dumbstruck by cloud pith, seeking
The proper word for rainy concrete.

I'll keep what I remember of leaving
Ethan's pool. I let moonlight negotiate

The terms of my release:
A flummoxed field I cut through lonely,

Nothing holy, never suspecting a thing.

Docents

I pass a shipwreck every day on my way to work.
The vacant craft of water's wear, the wood-to-bone
Workmanship of gentler ruin wakens something calm
And adolescent in me. Is it grace? That rotunda blue

Holds it like a bird of rust and rib gone limp
In a hunting dog's soft mouth. I can't help
But cry out when I see it. Once, I told you a dream I had
Of a museum of summer camp letters, of golden aisles

Full of tissue-paper missives and hollering scrawl, as if all we ask
Is safe harbor for our past selves, to dummy them up
Behind amniotic glass and purring, recirculating fans, forever.
Truth is, I've had it with sanctuary. Nothing real breaks through

The spotless museum's mindless peace. Instead, give me tempest,
Give me four walls and a sledgehammer and I'll bring you a slate of sky
So bright it hurts to look at. Let's make that shipwreck ours.
Aren't we always taking on water? Aren't we always castaways

Of each uncertain moment to the next? Inside, you'll find your roses—
Big as marshmallows—Fallen from the bush, the broken kitchen tiles
In the shape of states we haven't been to yet. Come what may,
It cannot touch us now, the tide comes every day, the high water marks

Like pencil scratches arpeggio a doorjamb. All our lovestruck stories
Have a home that crumbles, just as we do. Isn't that better?
Isn't that the honest-to-God truth of the matter? At sunset,
Artifacts of shadow fall across the ship,

And I am full of a ferocious love. May we always fall for the underdog.