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Hi.

How is everyone?

I've been thinking a lot about transition lately. About change, about segueing from one phase of life to another. We are as a society currently in the midst of what amounts to an enormous change. The pandemic feels like it's starting to go into an end phase. And not to overlook the fact that tens of thousands of people a day are still getting sick, with thousands dying, but life, to some degree, is happening again.

We are gathering in groups. We are going out to eat. We are entering each other's homes without masks and with less fear than any other time in the last two years of existence. There is a sense of return, of "normal" existence reinstating itself. We are stepping away from the grimmest days of this horrible moment in history and starting to move towards, well, something.

I'm not going to try and guess, or to even pinpoint, what an end to pandemic looks like, but I can say this: we aren't there yet. Not at all. We're in what I believe to be the hardest part of any major shift: the unformed grayness between two points on a timeline. The moment where one thing is starting to fade and another is rising from the primordial ooze and everyone is trying to balance the difficulties of just living life with the even greater challenges of adjusting that life to the new situation.

We are all trying to exist within the predetermined structure of life as it's being torn down around us. It's emotional frontier living on a global scale and without anyone having asked, we have all been dropped smack dab in the middle of it. The world has, for all intents and purposes, broken, the cracks and wounds on all levels, in every aspect, of society that had become so sadly commonplace they just took on the facade of "living" are buried no longer. The pandemic was, and is, a society-altering event that will continue to reveal its effects for decades, centuries even.

Transition is not easy, ever, and this bleak stretch of time feels even harder. We are each, personally, trying to come to grips with trauma on a scale unseen by most living today while simultaneously trying to keep upright as the ground beneath our feet seems to heave and buckle on a daily basis all the while the future we are inevitably moving towards looks grim and murky at very best.

I want to be positive here and say something like, "hold on, things are getting better, we just have to wait this out" but I don't buy it. We as human beings on an individual scale need to see this period of time for what it is: a drawn out shift from what we knew to what we don't and we need to have agency in not only recognizing this, but realizing that we are stepping into unknown territory and we are not always going to do it gracefully. It might look the same, but we are emerging from the darkness into a new world and we are going to make mistakes as we try to figure it out. Big ones, small ones, everything in-between and that's not only okay, it's just the way we stumble forward. And though everything might no longer be the same, this awkward clawing and scratching to drag ourselves into the next stage of living, it is quite possibly the most recognizably human thing we do.

We just need to be aware of it, to allow ourselves to change, to give ourselves the time to consciously struggle with what we've lost and what might be coming down the pipe.

Transition isn't ever easy, but if we try to ignore this part, it's only going to be more difficult.

'Till next time.

N

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police brutality, racism and violence
perpetuated towards BIPOC
communities in all forms.

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All we need is the hand.

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WE HAVE A PATREON

We aren't in this for the money.

That said: there are costs in doing what we do.

Any help with those costs (and with the costs of future endeavors) would be greatly appreciated.

If not, we get it and we still appreciate you.

If so, we're working on some special rewards. And we know you love special rewards.

THANK YOU TO THESE FOLKS

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On Our First Date, I Tell You My Venus is in Aries

SYDNEY VOGL

which is my way of saying
i've never met a red flag

who didn't make me want
to write a poem about their hands

you, the rotting gut of the sea
me, the hopeful fisherman

you have ruined so many things
before me, tell me about your ex's

daydreams, your collapsing
liver, your mother's favorite sweater

which sat, vodka sogged,
in the trunk of your car

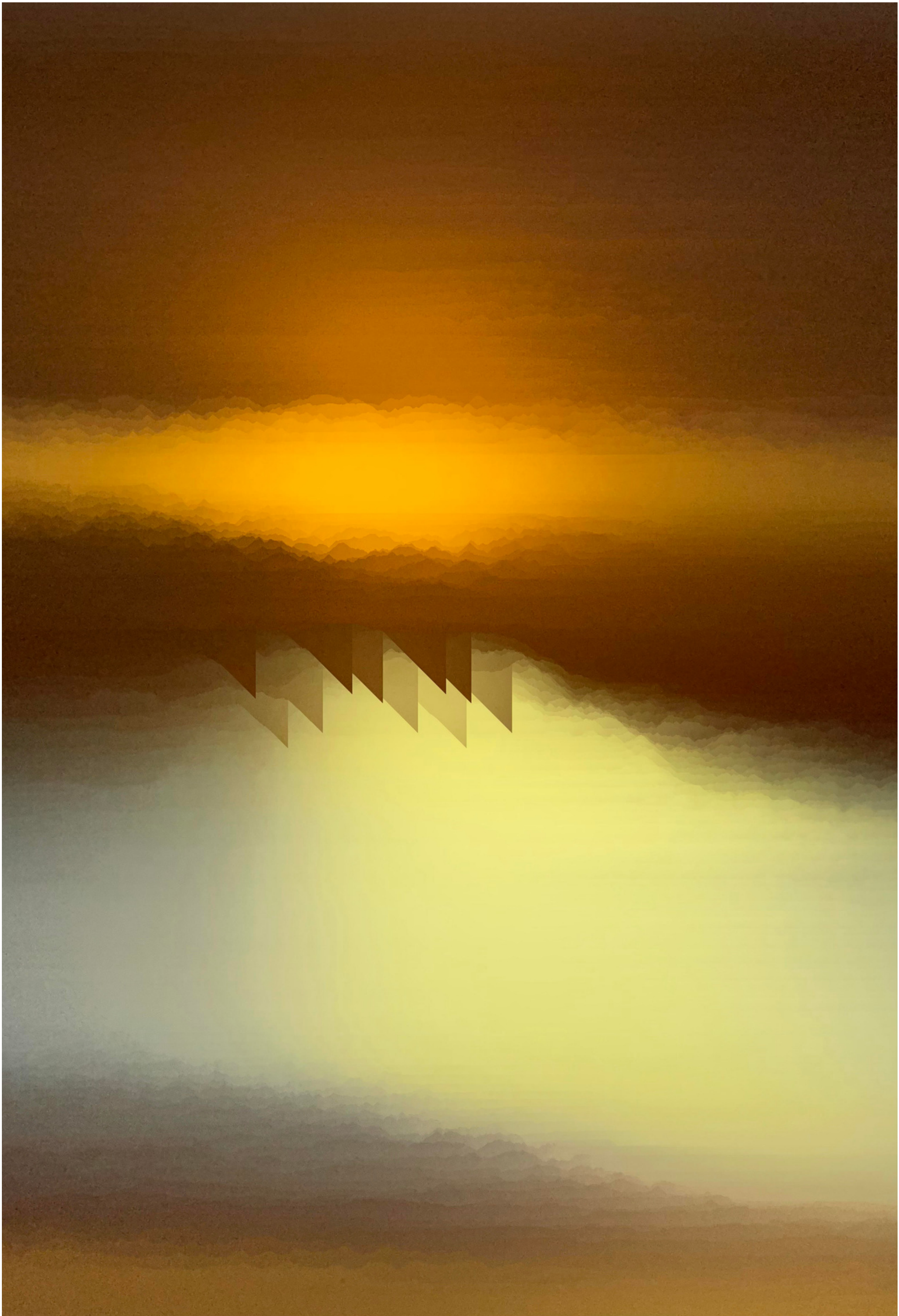
for an entire summer. i palm the top
of your thigh, proposing myself

as your next crumbling skyline.
nevermind this watery grave,

do you have enough fruit
in your fridge to last us

until saturday? can i tell you
that you have the most brilliant

teeth i've ever seen? i want them
crooked & shipwrecked on my lips.



UNTITLED
JOEL P. GOLDSMITH
2021

innocuous

REBECCA SAMUELSON

I think if you have to develop
a fancier word for innocent
then there is something
hanging off pinky fingernails

Reminiscent of quick desserts
consumed after platefuls of
family style plates designated
for two side-eyed by waiters

That piece attempted to tuck
behind leftover strands that
used to be bangs or orange
turtlenecks to close out August

Do you hold filled notebooks
& empty tissue boxes to the
same standard or is lavender
too overwhelming at this point

Once the smoke clears before
automatically rekindling we'll
see that swimming in harm
doesn't require much effort



An Unnatural Body of Water

MAGGIE WANG

Listen: I want to make myself a castaway in the still center
of this ocean. I want the wind to push me back

to when I couldn't swim and leave me there. I want low tide
to hang upside-down from the clouds and tell me,

like you used to do, that I'm improbable, impossible. I want
the fish to teach me how to breathe underwater

and how to dance with whales and not be eaten. But before
I reach the water, their bodies are already writhing

above the surface, heavy with stillborn waves, tails knotting
the air like sailors on a capsizing ship. They are

drowning, gills flooded with too much salt, or not enough,
shimmering a last-ditch lighthouse for a dozen

miles offshore. Listen: yesterday, I slipped an empty bottle
into the water and watched as the air pushed

skyward and the plastic grew murky with heavy metals.
Since you left, the pearls have lost their sheen

to the dark, and the shells have clawed their way to drier
land, ribs of sea-music scattered in their wake.



SWIMMERS
KATY WELSH
2020

Danse Macabre

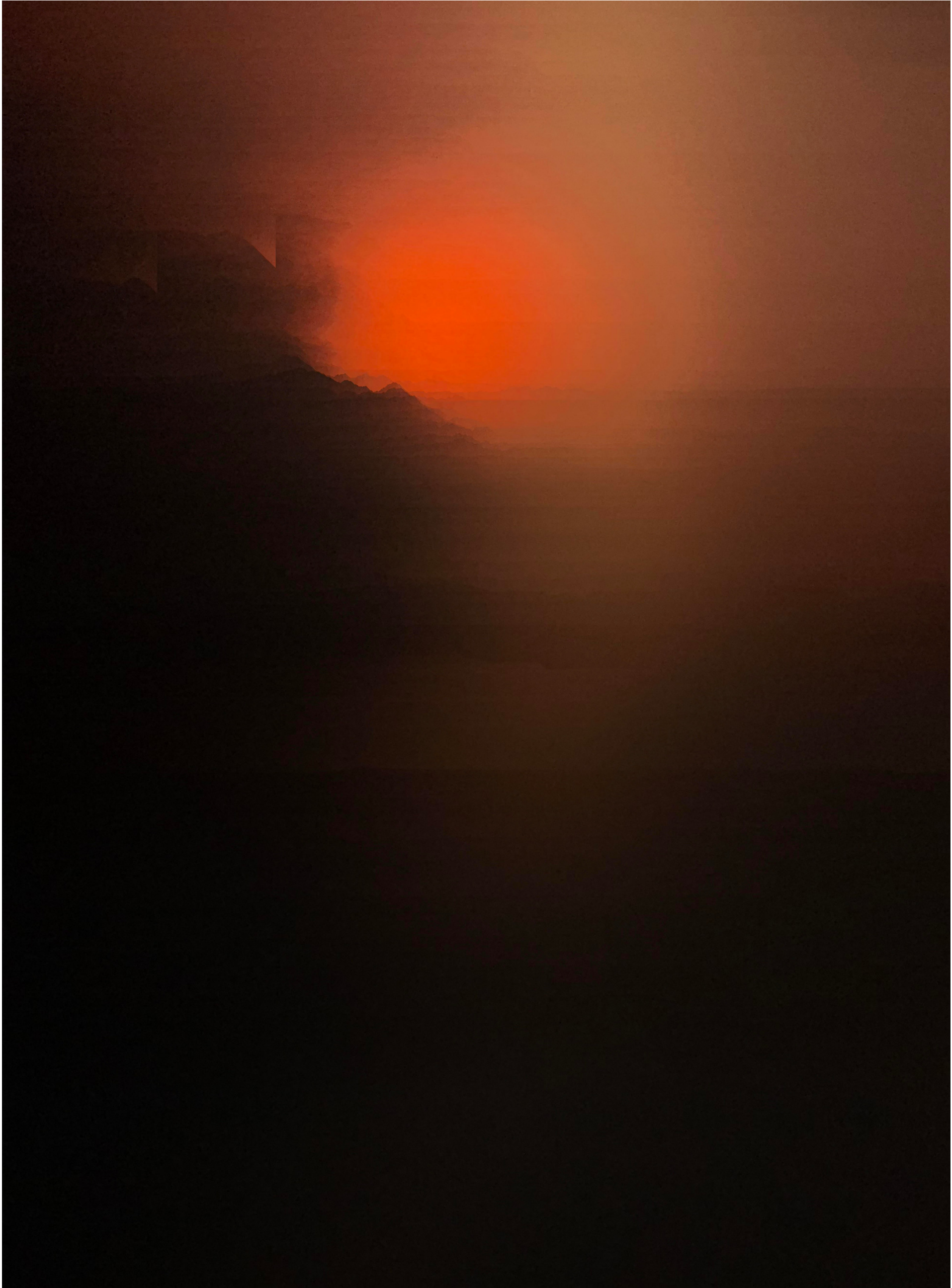
REBECCA BRATTEN WEISS

The cellar door rattles, little feet tap tap tapping,
the lime is trying to climb out of my gin and the mummies
are escaping the walls where I thought I'd plastered them in,
with a statue of St. Joseph and a crust of bread.

The roots of the old tree are writhing, the tree is scooting
along, shimmying, astonished squirrels scampering, everything
shaken and hyphenated and summoned, all the verbs gerunds,
except for tap tap and rat a tat, death watch, death dance.

We stick our heads out of windows and see them rollicking,
jaws tied with kerchiefs, everything percussion, can't help but tap along,
here comes everybody, zombie kittens and bone-horses, everyone a super
model now, too sexy for my skin, throwing glitter and shouting hurrah.

I said I needed more dancing. I said I needed to drop a few pounds.
Now look at me sweetie, did you say you wanted some of this?
I've got gin, I've got lime, I've got holy water and a crust of bread,
come dance with me, come feel this forever tomorrow the end.



UNTITLED
JOEL P. GOLDSMITH
2021

latchkey trinity

KARINA FANTILLO

*dude, i call my brothers
talk football & warriors
nyc pastrami from katz's*

*sprinkled with i'm moving
to idaho or kida licked me
awake after i collapsed*

*circling round imaginary
tracks in mario kart
close enough to bump*

*fists without dipping
in condensed milk
we eat with a spoon*

*latchkey trinity learned
filipino cha cha at midnight
pusoy dos in the summer*

*jumped on muni, held
at gunpoint, accused
of shoplifting, rotated*

carousel hospital visits
with papa, we stick
like white on rice

scratching eczema-
flared skin whetting
a bolo that can slice

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CURTAIN IS
COMING DOWN.**

