

Esmé Beaumont

[artificial sandalwood, full moon]

happy shouts too much, bares their teeth when they laugh,
garish orange flares up from beneath and i bear it,
this harshness, as long as my weak will permits—
but leave with a sore sickened head, all aghast;
i return to this earth-smelling uprooting air,
where i dream slow of offering, to lethe, my care.

now this cheap incense smoke spreads out over my desk
and i cough up a prayer and a song, steal a breath
from my ten-year-old self, make a vow to the trees
(to the ornamental cherry, to the over-pruned oak,
to the willow cathedral of lower school myth),
and i cringe at myself as i whisper a plea—

but it's answered, though briefly—
the rain trickles in—and i open—i unlatch
the window, and hail an old friend:

the man in the moon slinks down from the sky,
trails long curling fingers along the horizon,
leaves ringlets of cigarette smoke in his wake,
and softens the edge of the brake. so i thank him,
and wave as he whorls where the treeline begins,
and the silence, the heaviness sings.