

LAUREN CAMP

Property

After each lyric drop of rain falls bodiless, shuddering
and rippling to the shoulder of this parched earth.

After this,
the deep-throated sage, artemisia, and juniper slowly lift,
arranging their scent.

A desert takes what staggers to it.

The storm landed in unplanted pathways the spiritless
withered places, transfixed nearly
to stone, and now the ground
is soaked in a blanket of flat-patch goathead.

Winds hiss through, unfinished, to say something we don't understand.
What we've planted fails under the branchless sky, and the periphery
of the property is wrapped in fast-formed stickers, a crowded geometry:
precise, spiteful, yellow, without margins.

Each morning we scoop with trowels.

I had never loved a land enough to want to bend
and whittle out the dangers, to lift them up by centers,
needling the soft pads of my fingers where they gaze upward. Enough
that I would sign my name to each spot I clear
with a drop of blood.

My bucket fills with five-sided thorns sprawling like stars.

And in the end, nothing left
but the dead-dry ground—
again shredded at the effort of pressing water to it.