

JOE WILKINS

**If I Could,
or Poem Against the Crumbling of the Republic**

Old friend,
I am afraid you are lost,

the streetlights sputtering,
the night about
hard & dark.

I know you're tired.
I know this is not
where you thought you'd be.

Jesus Christ,
be careful.

The door you see might well be
a mouth, its rusty voice

the lie's hinge.

I'd bring a flashlight
& a sack of beef jerky sticks

if I could.
Maybe I can. Maybe if I reach out
my fingers might shape

the bones of your face.