IN HONOR OF
CADENCE
SUMMERS



SSL

POETRY LAB

An anthology of works from participants of South Salt Lake Poetry Lab from 2024-2026

I want to write and write
then take a break for reading.

I want to fall in love
but doubt desirability.

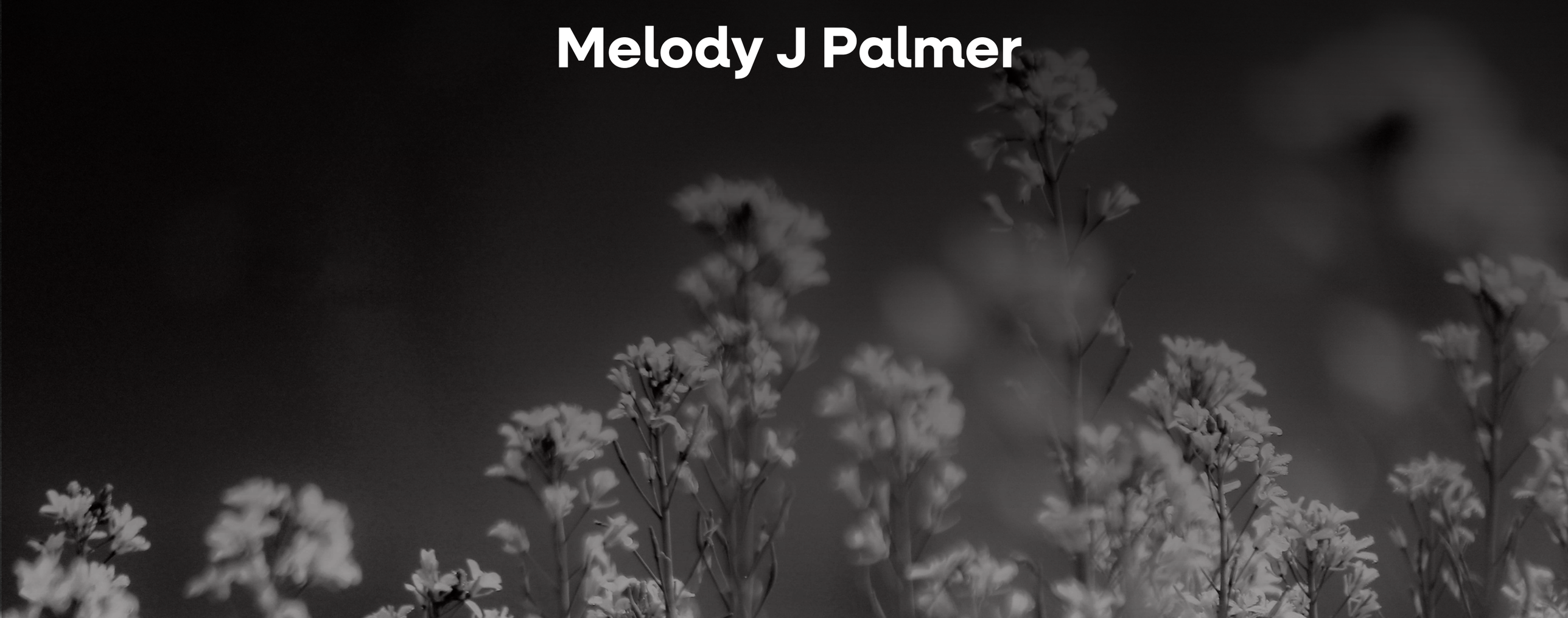
I want my heart to be open
and need to adjust my defenses.

I want to move forward -
the steps aren't in a straight line.

I want to support myself
then pause and revel in how far I've come.

I want to remember
and build a life to sustain it.

Melody J Palmer



One Girl

That girl,
Back there...
With the curly hair,
She drives me mad because...
She is so loud.
I would give anything to shut her mouth.

OH!

Then there is that girl up there,
with the curly red hair...
She is so mysterious and quiet
Her gaze darts about.
Why?
I think I can hear her thinking.

This girl right here....
With the tiniest ears,
Who can speak without words.
Mindful of words
It’s a WONDERful world. I am joyful, to be that girl!

Jaime Brafford

Forecast Delivered with a Shrug

From here, this weekend promises nothing,
Which isn’t to say it will be a disappointment
and I may as well ride the snooze button
through to Monday’s humdrum guarantees.

It’s more like this: forty-eight hours unburdened
by form, like Utah’s sky in mid-September.
Try pouring that into a container or agenda
shaped like anything but the ramble

of the Wasatch Front. I guarantee you’ll spill at
least a drop of the sunshine which, after another
summer of heat waves breaking records, finally
shines friendly again.

Sure, tomorrow may always bring rain this time
of year, and lightening’s never far from a cloud’s
thoughts, but the only real differnce between
Spring’s birdsong and thunder rolling in

Is magnitude. Anyway, tha’t how I like my
weekends. That wide and surprising.

Joe Roberts

A50

The embrace
between another mother and my
body, holding together
a moment, a breath
or two / bags of candy
or ten / hours
waiting separately, together
glance every time the door opens
even though you know it isn't time yet
sorry, I've never been good at waiting
patient, you in that fragile gown
paper-thin and crackling
you look different under these lights
I sit off to the side of your bed
and interview the future
sorry, I've never been good at waiting
I am not one who knows how to exist
comfortably in the present —
I stand between my past and my future
and attempt to translate
talk myself someplace else
tell myself what I need to hear
to survive the present moment —
there's still some time / there isn't much longer
left
I put the calendar in between my teeth
and crack down until it becomes edible



two years becomes
24 months becomes
semesters becomes
square little boxes
I can fill in and pretend the color changes things
ten hours becomes
ten sets of sixty minutes
surviving ten minutes six times
the body becomes
something I do not need to be present for
time will pass regardless
of it if you live or not
I’m sorry
I have never been good at waiting
arms always outstretched for the next
moment, nails scrabbling for purchase
on a slope too steep for standing still
what they don’t tell you about waiting
is that arrival just herlads more time
and you can never be satisfied
if you only know how to ask “when?”
The times I have felt most connected
to the present have been pain
blue-black room, suffocating from the lack of
space between us
phone screen all encompassing, too dark to
see anything other than your words



eye contact across the counter
four silent figures facing forward at the dinner table
the moment before you speak but I have already heard you
the moment before I release the words
the space between a text message, gap-toothed
the space between two bodies, unspeaking
the space between one moment to the next
sorry, I've never been good at staying
present / grounded / here and now
in the thickened stillness of the current moment
I find myself reaching for an imagined comfort
or even the stale air of the past
because my body only understands the present
to be painful / to be powerless / to be nothing
but
the unceasing intolerability of the wait

I have never learned to arrive
only how to hope
and as I stand on the other side
of every intersecting wait,
I can't help but think
that arrival feels a lot like
having nowhere left to go
at all.



Jude Perno

What I have Carried
Part I (3/27/2025)

What's in my backpack of life experiences
Not yet discarded trailside in my journey?
Mostly skill-sets to navigate unpredictable living.
I'm surprised to find a small item, hidden under all the rest.
It's tightly sheathed though easily opened.

It's the me I could not show.
"Highly sensitive", a term recently found,
Is the essence protected there.
Grade school report cards, more than once,
Commented "too sensitive".
Untutored, I clung hard to my coping guesses
But not hard enough.
I felt like flotsam, tossed here and there
By family, church, and culture.
Adulthood required self-support
And working added to the swells.
As my keenest edges wore down,
I dove inward and reinforced the shell.
So far away
There was nowhere left to retreat.
So I then so tenderly and completely sealed away this self
That I forgot.

What I have Carried
Part I (3/27/2025)

And became flotsam in my own rough seas.
Depression, anxiety, addiction, welfare,
medication, therapy,
Self-judgment and shame.
My head barely above drowning for three
decades
As I gasped for breath I'd sealed away.

Julie Russell



What I have Carried
Part II (10/28/2026)

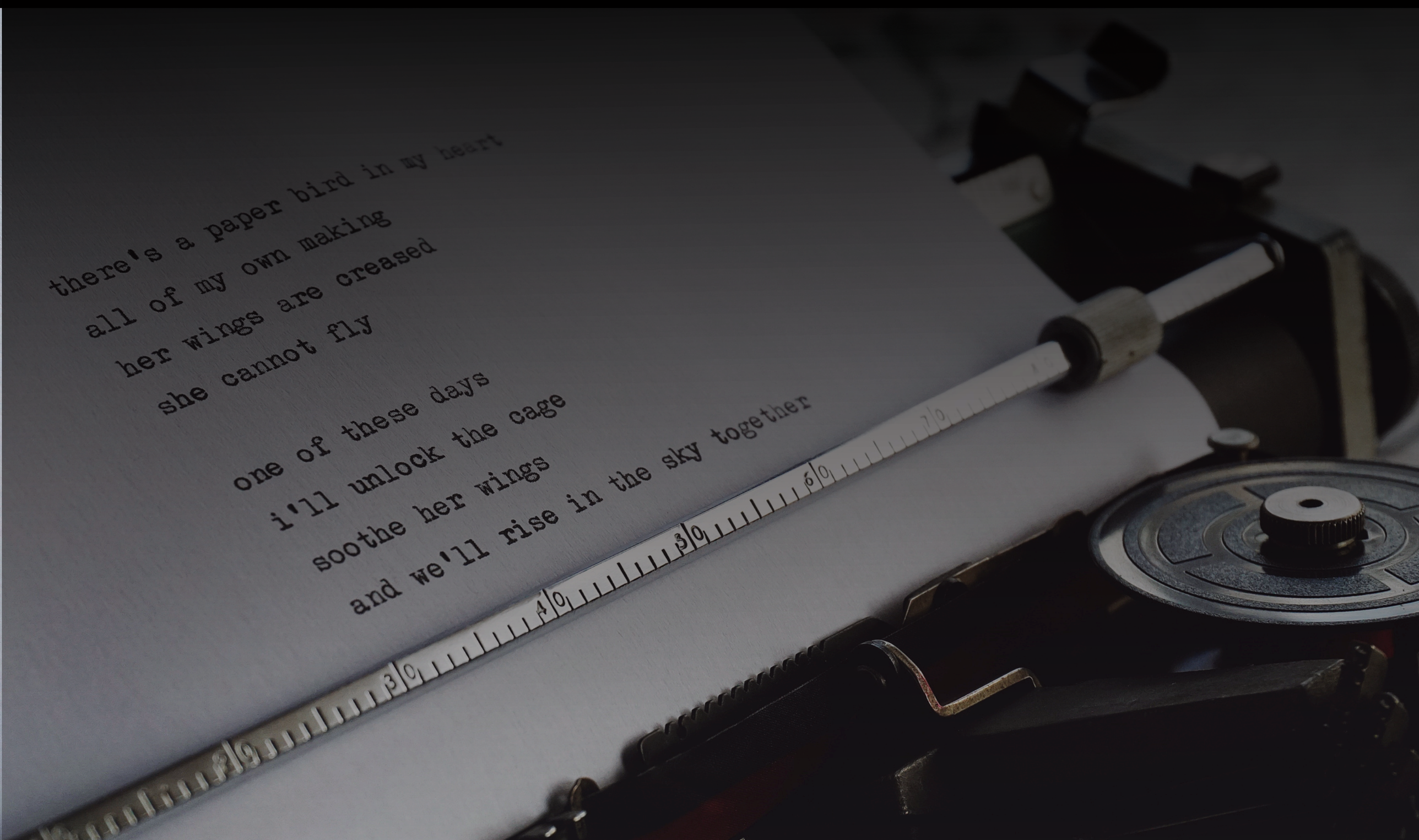
A secure home in a move to South Salt Lake three years ago
Finally provided mooring in that ocean
To rest, recuperate, and then assess the sea outside of it.
I knew there was shore, a steadier grounding.
I did not know that love of words would be my kayak there.
I found enough breath to risk my words in a poetry lab class.
White-haired and ignorant of poetry
I sat among youngsters so full of knowledgeable poetic voice.
The cadence of the class, a regular, rhythmic flow, prompted me back.
Month, after month, after month, I renewed my sitting at that table.
What I'd concealed, I saw they knew, too.

I remain uncertain of my poet's craft
So uncertain at times it still hurts.
Yet I don't feel measured.
I feel among fellow voyagers
Carrying what I've carried, with less fear.

What I have Carried
Part II (10/28/2026)

This sojourn now in conclusion,
I bid adieu in bittersweet regret
As I have multitudes of conclusions before.
It has seen me through the reef in my kayak of words.
I gaze toward the horizon of twenty months ago.
Tears well
As I stand on a shore.

Julie Russell



Community Poetry Class (Spring)

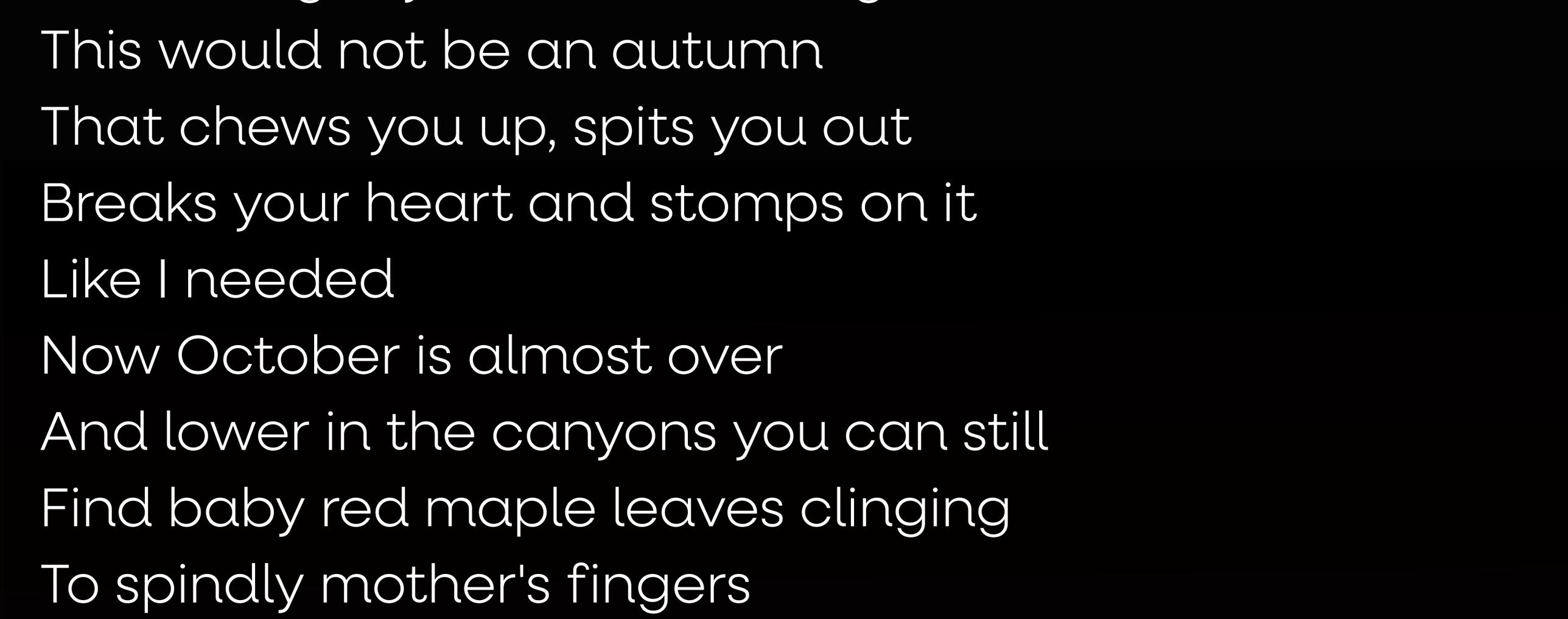
There is an Oregon grape
Flowering, yellow and honeyed
To one side of the wheelchair ramp
At the Historic Scott School.
I didn't know Oregon grape could
Be a tree and
I didn't know it smelled sweet.
To the other side of the ramp,
A magnolia blooming magenta and cream
The petals already wilting, drooping
Falling heavy on the cement.
It's Mid March not even
Aries season yet.
Class dismissed, the horizon
Deep coral to celeste to indigo
Bradford pear wafts warm on the breeze that hits my face
Biking home.
I'm happy to not be in love,
Or waiting for it.



Kes Allen

Everything is Ending (Fall)

I almost missed the leaves this year.
Took an ill-timed trip to Texas
Longed for a crisp wind, rain
The frozen bones of an aching heart
Instead: sweltering
Silk shirt sticking to skin
It turns out, there are consequences
For walking everywhere
Doing things the hard way: alone,
Cheap, stubborn.
Before I left, the mountain air was barely cool, leaves yellowing slightly
But curling dry and the the edges.
This would not be an autumn
That chews you up, spits you out
Breaks your heart and stomps on it
Like I needed
Now October is almost over
And lower in the canyons you can still
Find baby red maple leaves clinging
To spindly mother's fingers
And among the fallen brown scrub oak
My eyes are still grasping
Hoarding, searching
For what just left.



Kes Allen