

Wales Haiku Journal Competition

Summer Competition
'26





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Commended



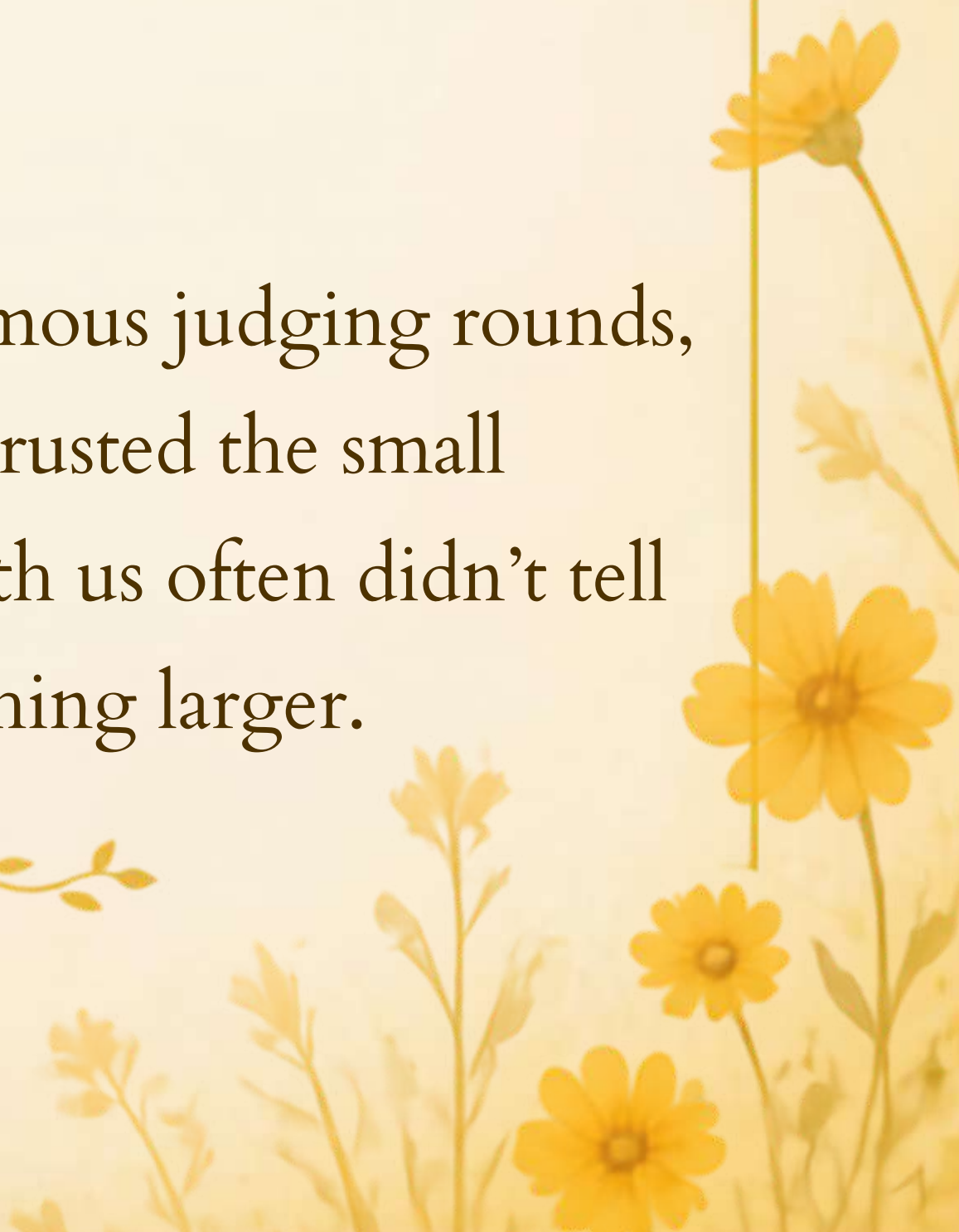
Editors' Note

With 1,028 poems submitted by 159 poets, we knew from the beginning that narrowing this year's Summer Competition down to just a handful would not be easy.

It was a pleasure to read such a wide-ranging collection of haiku and to see summer arrive in so many different ways: heatwaves and thunderstorms, beaches and back gardens, insects, birds, fruit ripening, childhood holidays, illness, grief, love and loss.

We were reminded that a season is never only weather or landscape, but everything that happens while we are living through it.

As we moved through the anonymous judging rounds, we kept returning to poems that trusted the small moment. The ones that stayed with us often didn't tell us what to feel or reach for something larger.





They gave us something particular to notice – an image, a sound, a scent, an unexpected detail – and left space around it. Sometimes a poem we passed over on a first reading was the one we found ourselves thinking about later.

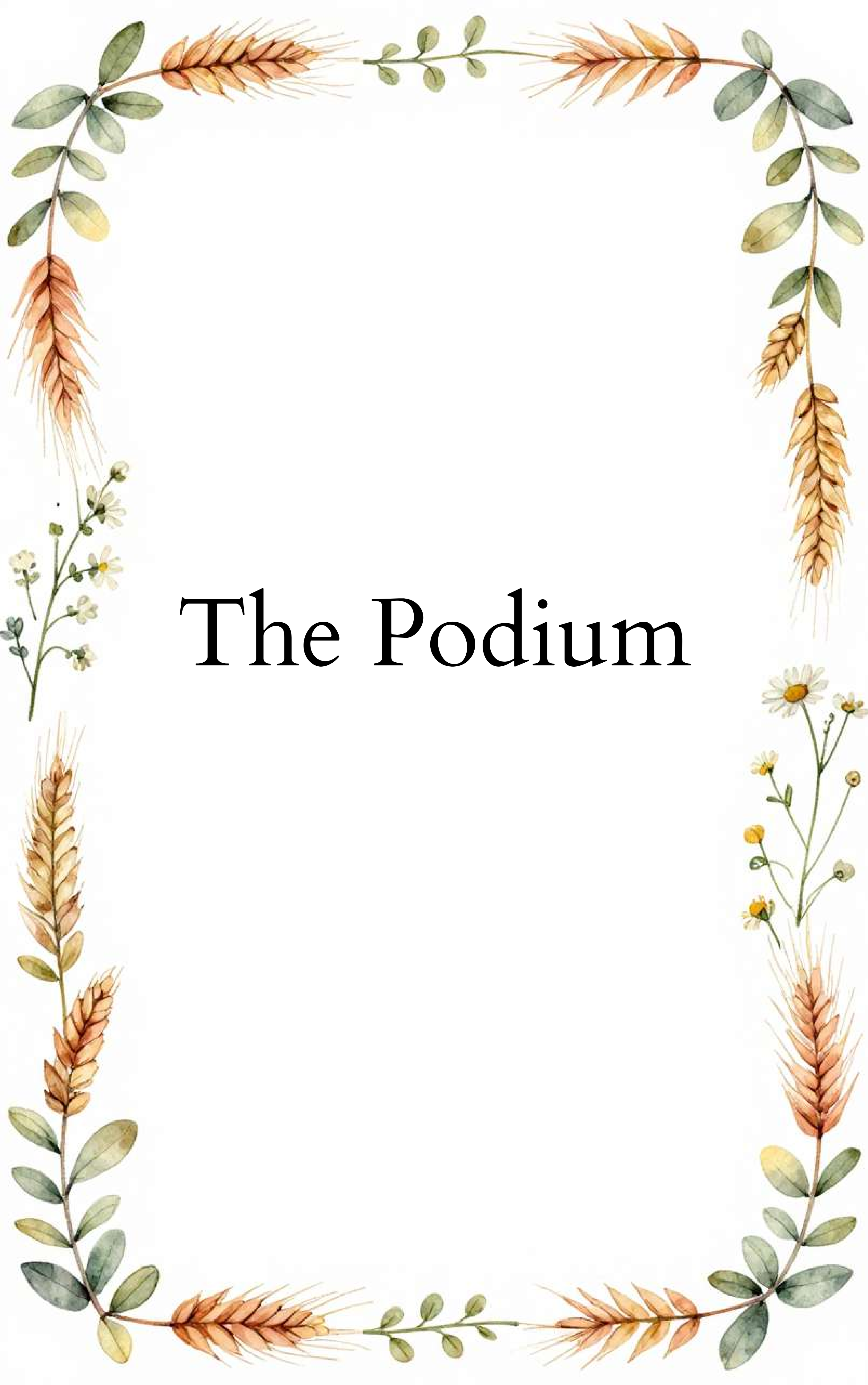
We didn't always choose the same poems, which made the final stages especially interesting. We each had favourites we wanted to bring forward, then went back to the poems again after hearing what the other had seen in them. Some grew with every reading. Others we simply loved from the beginning.

Thank you to everyone who sent us their work. There were far more poems we admired than we could possibly place, and narrowing such a strong field to our final choices was no easy task. We hope you enjoy the winning and commended poems as much as we have enjoyed spending time with them.

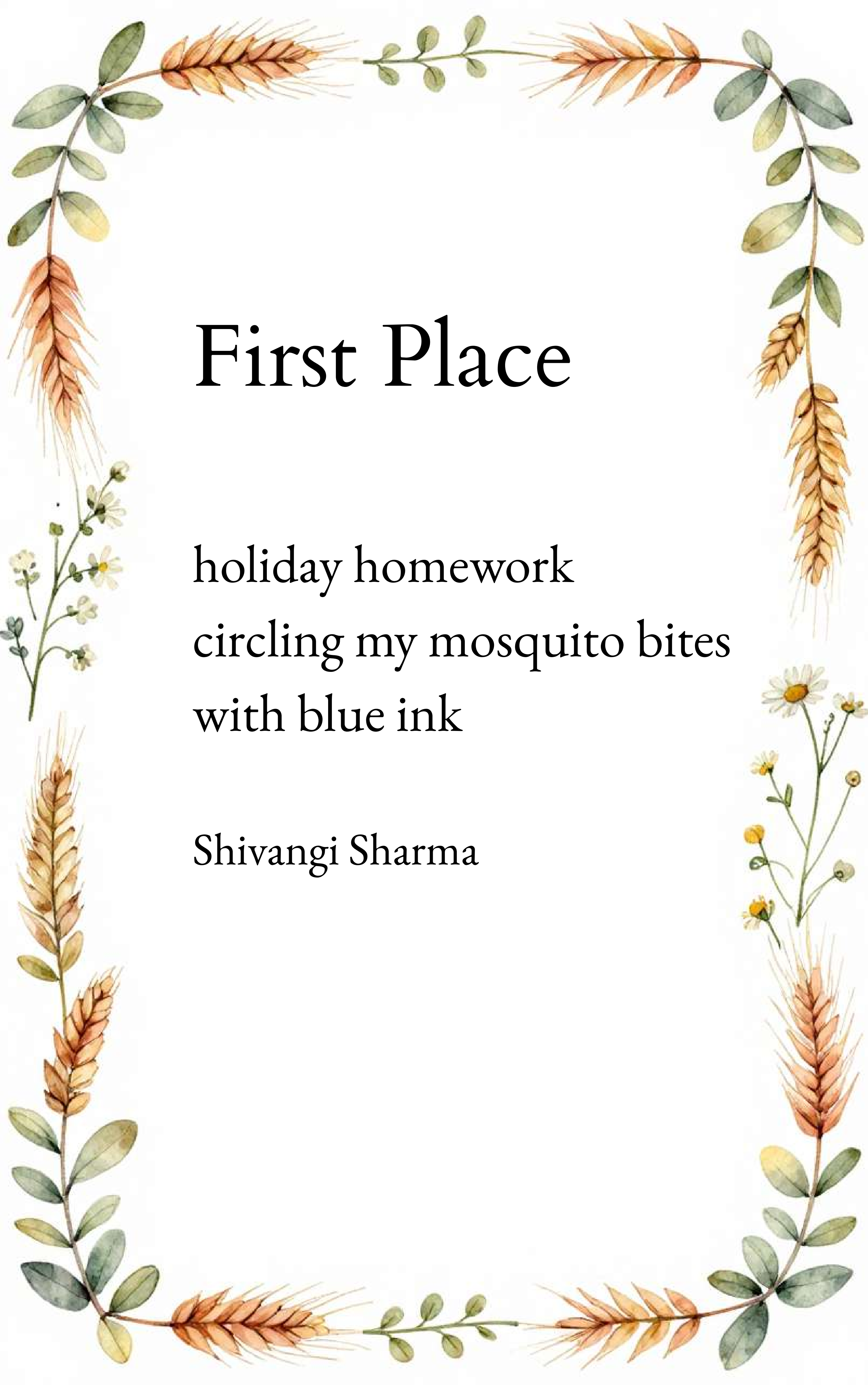
Joe & Luci

Joe Woodhouse, C.X. Turner





The Podium



First Place

holiday homework
circling my mosquito bites
with blue ink

Shivangi Sharma



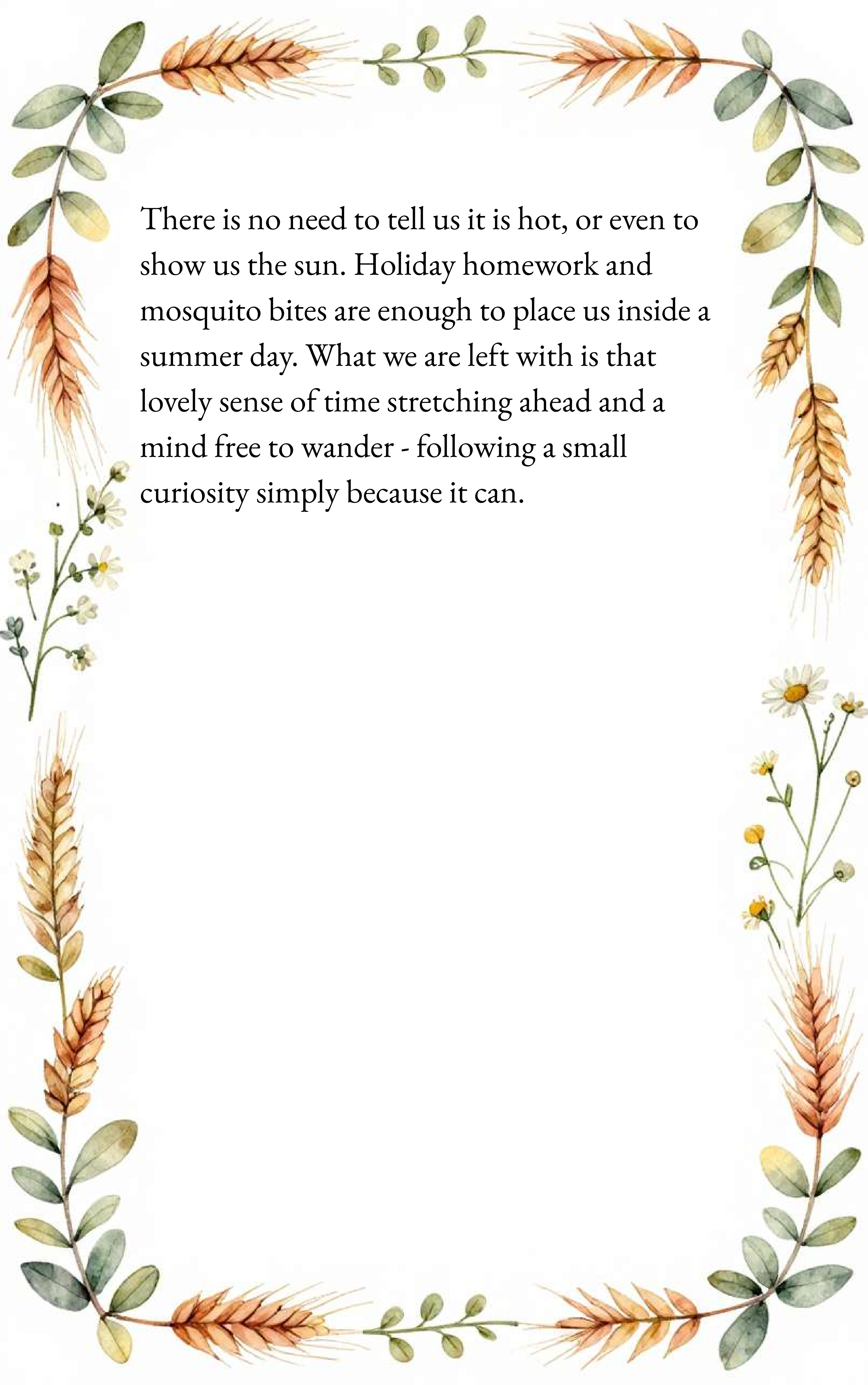
Judges' Commentary

holiday homework
circling my mosquito bites
with blue ink

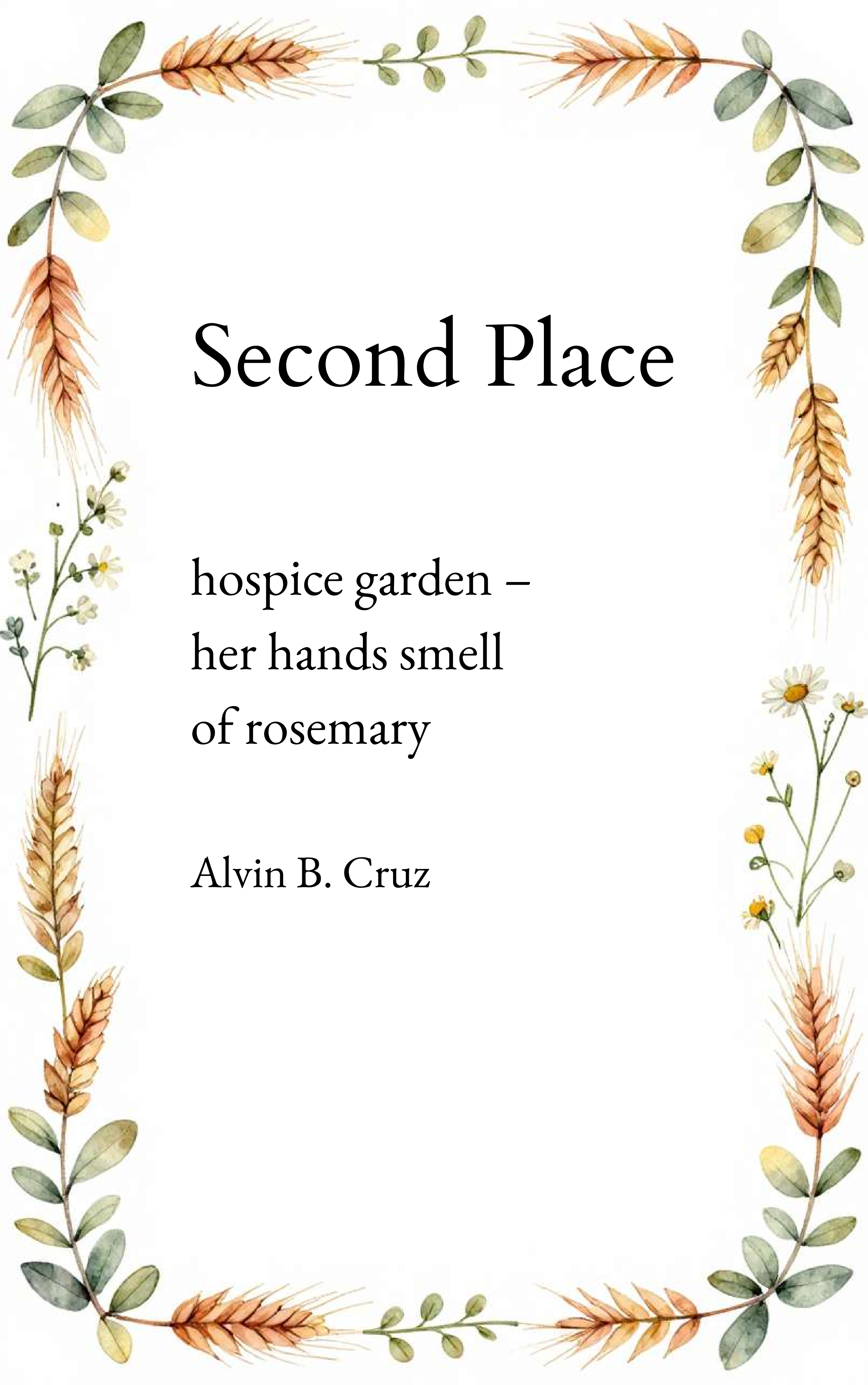
Shivangi Sharma

There is so much summer mischief in these three lines. “Holiday homework” gives us the thing that should be happening; instead, the pen has wandered elsewhere. We can picture those blue circles appearing around each mosquito bite while the homework waits.

We loved the levity of this poem, but also how much it shows us through one small action. We aren't told the speaker is bored, distracted or curious. We know it because they have started circling mosquito bites instead of doing what they are supposed to be doing. And “blue ink” makes the moment wonderfully particular. It is exactly the kind of detail that makes a memory feel real.



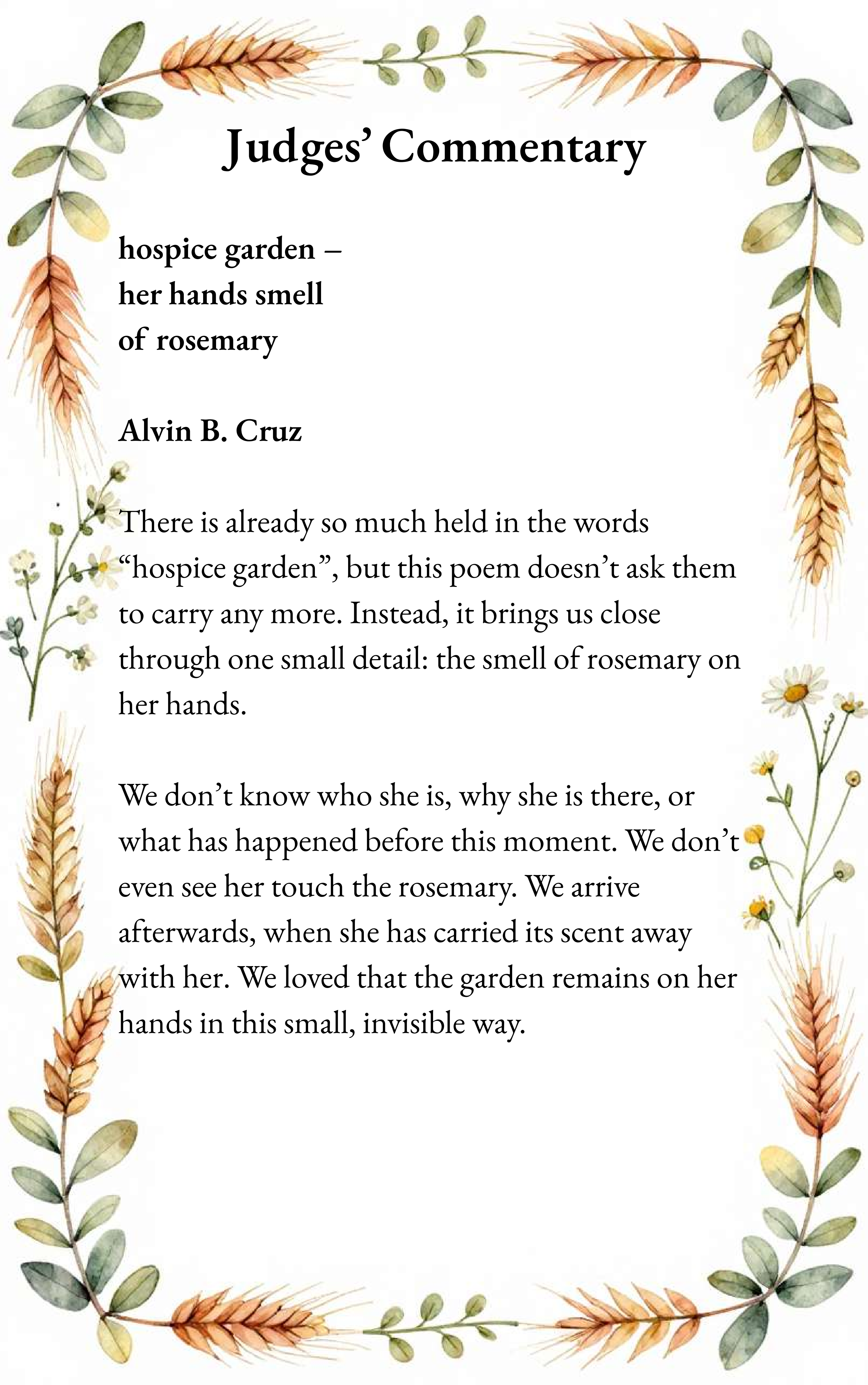
There is no need to tell us it is hot, or even to show us the sun. Holiday homework and mosquito bites are enough to place us inside a summer day. What we are left with is that lovely sense of time stretching ahead and a mind free to wander - following a small curiosity simply because it can.



Second Place

hospice garden –
her hands smell
of rosemary

Alvin B. Cruz



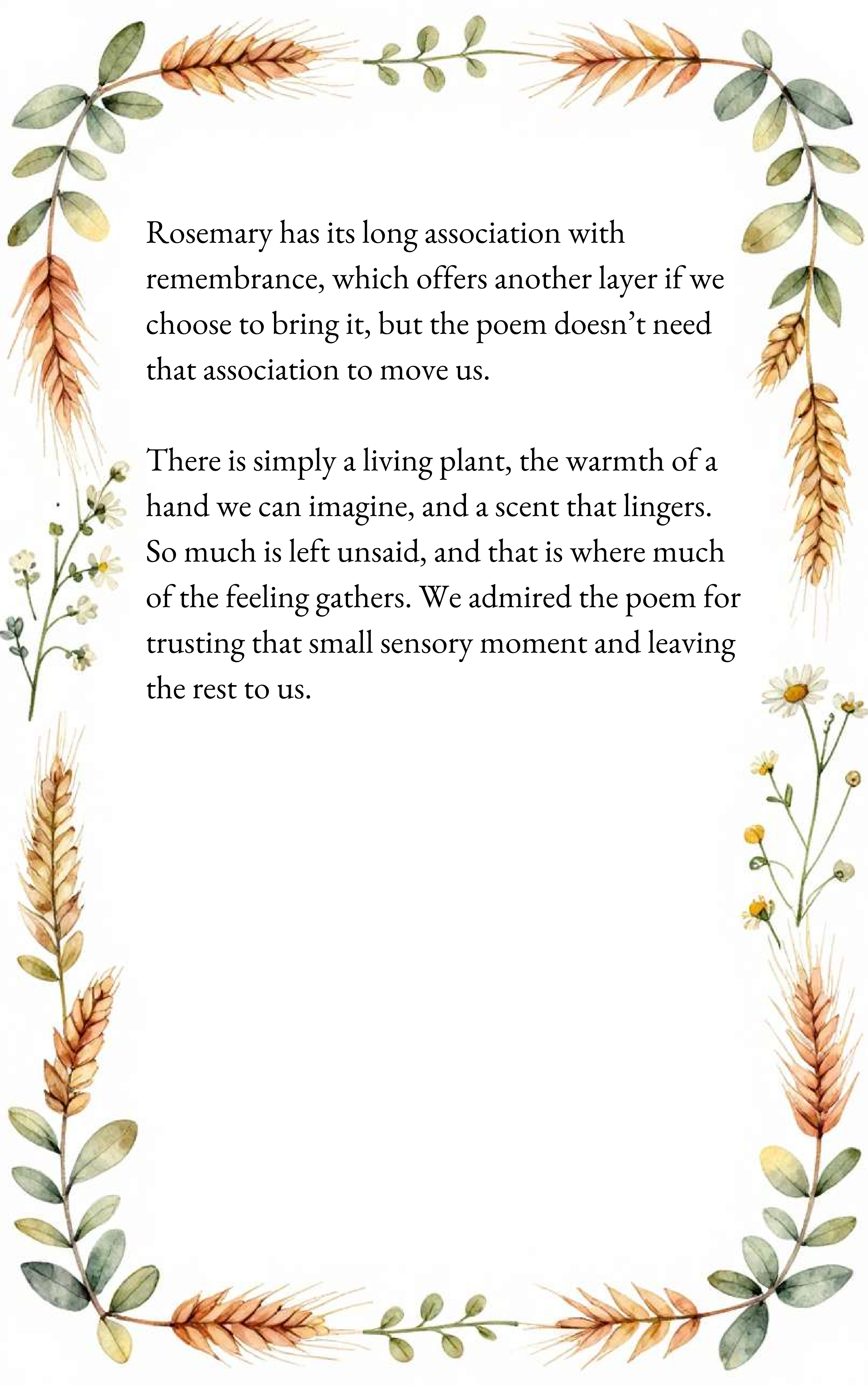
Judges' Commentary

hospice garden –
her hands smell
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Alvin B. Cruz

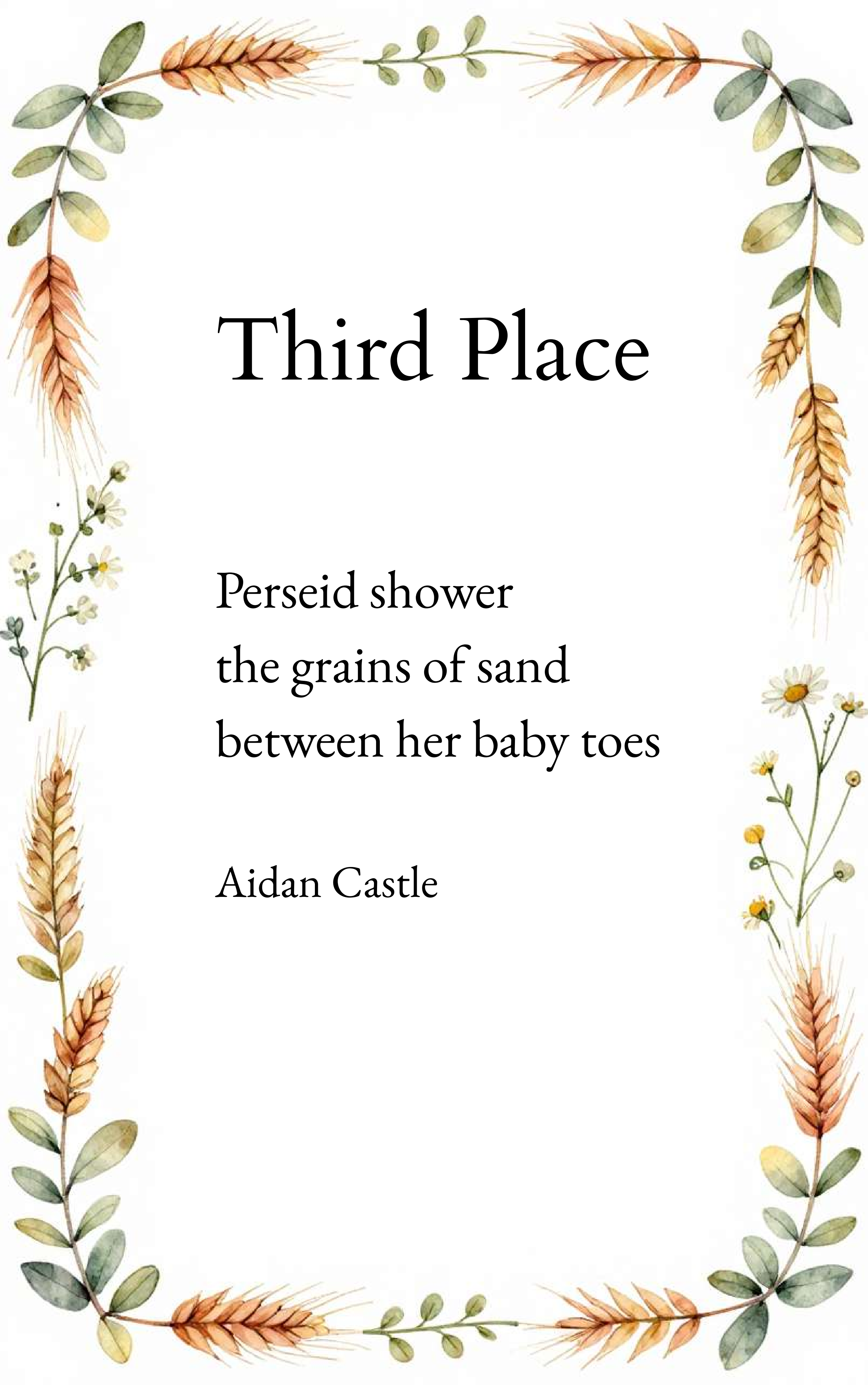
There is already so much held in the words “hospice garden”, but this poem doesn’t ask them to carry any more. Instead, it brings us close through one small detail: the smell of rosemary on her hands.

We don’t know who she is, why she is there, or what has happened before this moment. We don’t even see her touch the rosemary. We arrive afterwards, when she has carried its scent away with her. We loved that the garden remains on her hands in this small, invisible way.



Rosemary has its long association with remembrance, which offers another layer if we choose to bring it, but the poem doesn't need that association to move us.

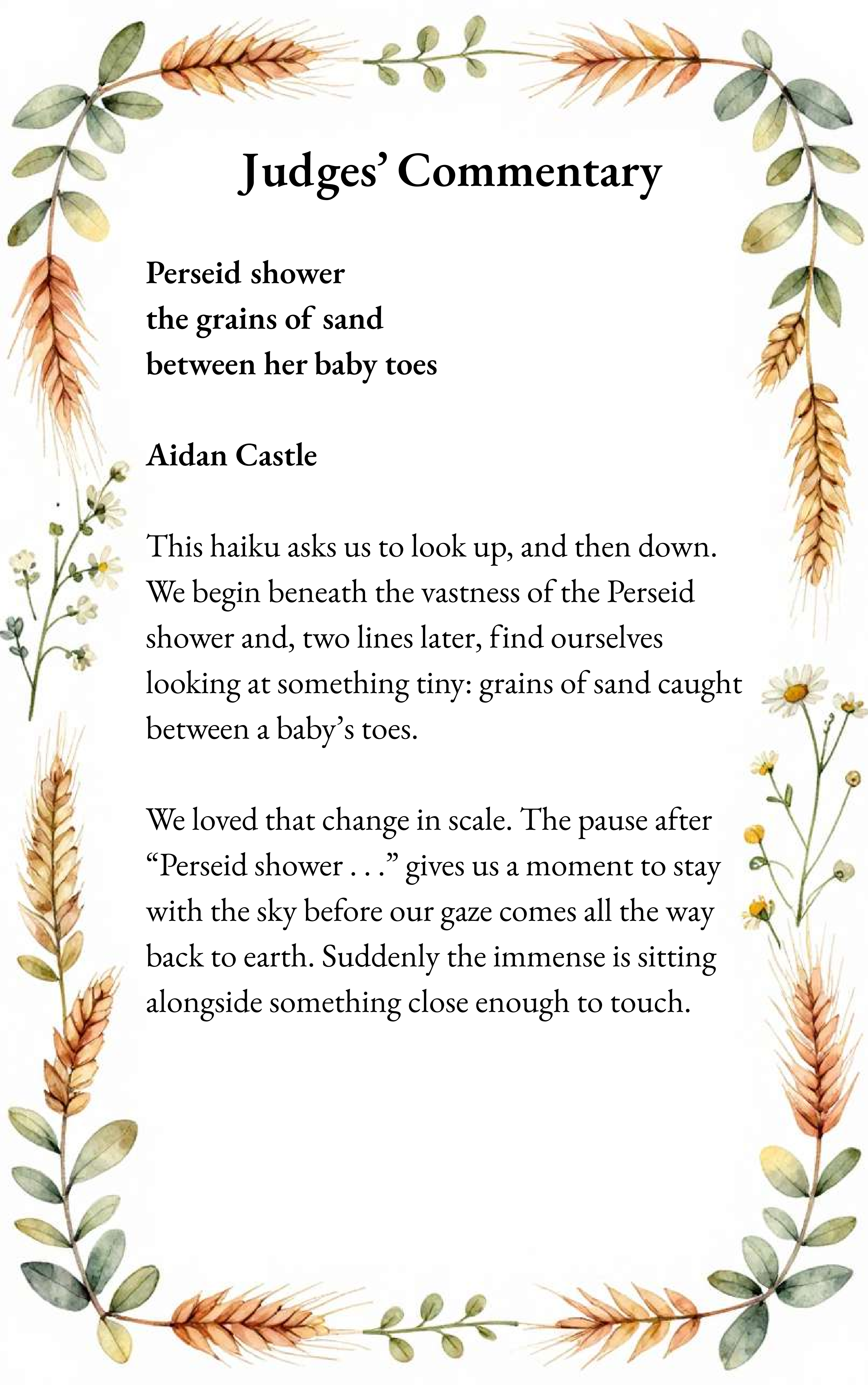
There is simply a living plant, the warmth of a hand we can imagine, and a scent that lingers. So much is left unsaid, and that is where much of the feeling gathers. We admired the poem for trusting that small sensory moment and leaving the rest to us.



Third Place

Perseid shower
the grains of sand
between her baby toes

Aidan Castle



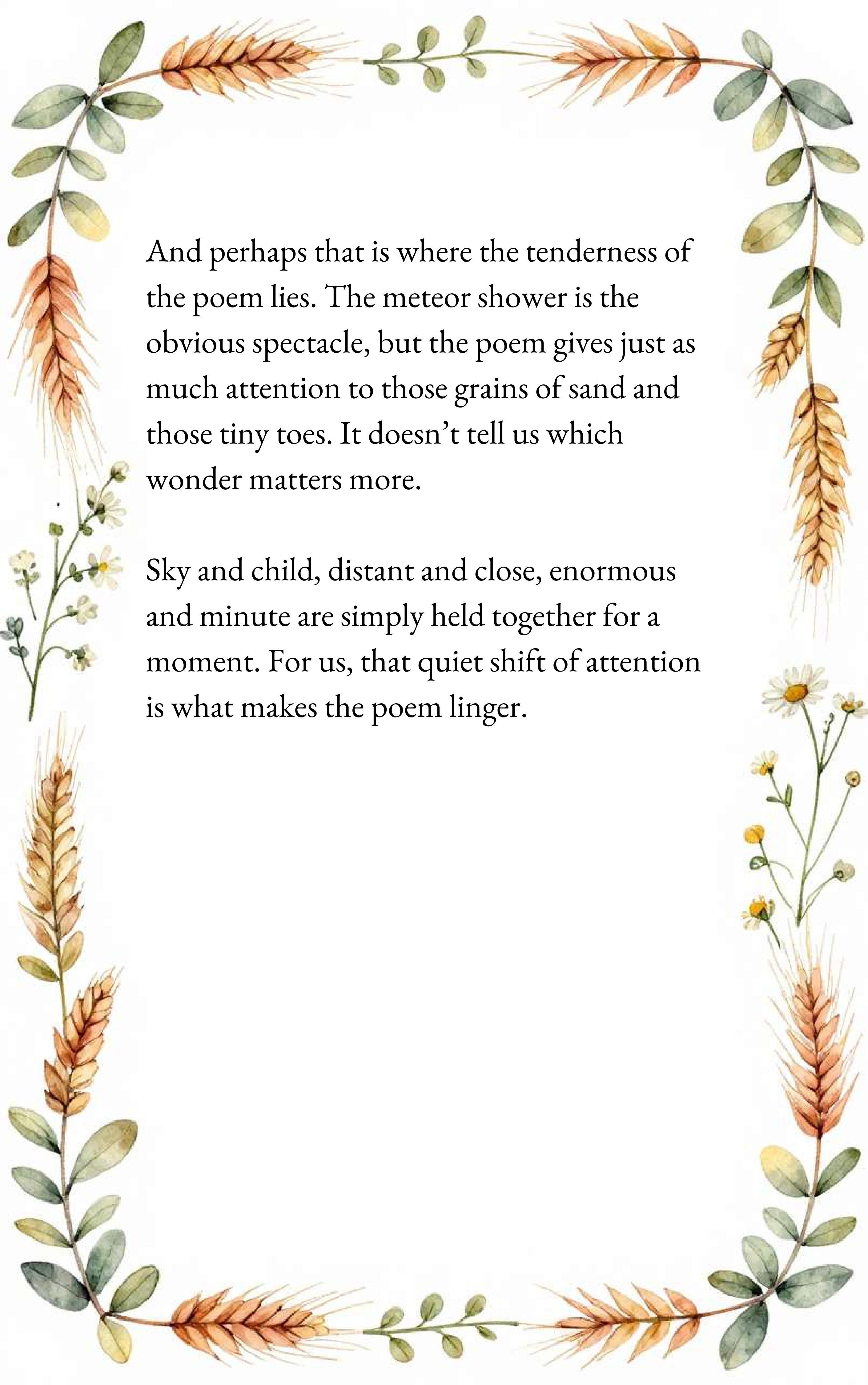
Judges' Commentary

Perseid shower
the grains of sand
between her baby toes

Aidan Castle

This haiku asks us to look up, and then down. We begin beneath the vastness of the Perseid shower and, two lines later, find ourselves looking at something tiny: grains of sand caught between a baby's toes.

We loved that change in scale. The pause after "Perseid shower . . ." gives us a moment to stay with the sky before our gaze comes all the way back to earth. Suddenly the immense is sitting alongside something close enough to touch.

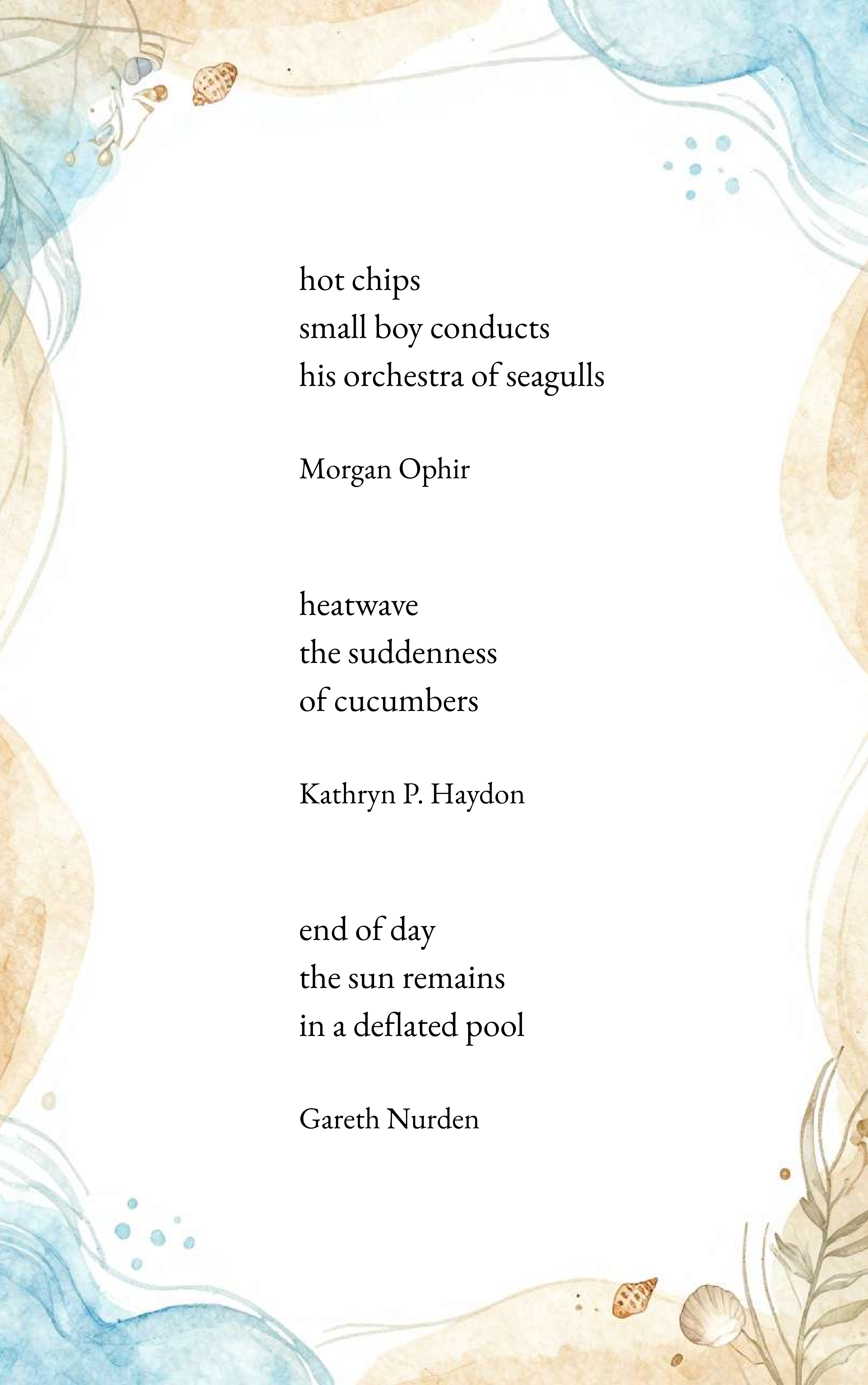


And perhaps that is where the tenderness of the poem lies. The meteor shower is the obvious spectacle, but the poem gives just as much attention to those grains of sand and those tiny toes. It doesn't tell us which wonder matters more.

Sky and child, distant and close, enormous and minute are simply held together for a moment. For us, that quiet shift of attention is what makes the poem linger.

A watercolor illustration of an underwater scene. The background is a light, sandy beige. In the top left, there's a blue, branching coral-like structure. To its right, a small orange and white striped fish swims. Further right, a small brown and white speckled shell floats. In the top right, a blue, wavy shape represents a bubble or a small pool of water, with several small blue dots below it. In the bottom left, another blue, wavy shape is visible. In the bottom right, there's a sandy area with a small brown and white speckled shell, a larger white shell, and a green, leafy plant. The text "Highly Commended" is centered in the middle of the image in a black, serif font.

Highly Commended



hot chips
small boy conducts
his orchestra of seagulls

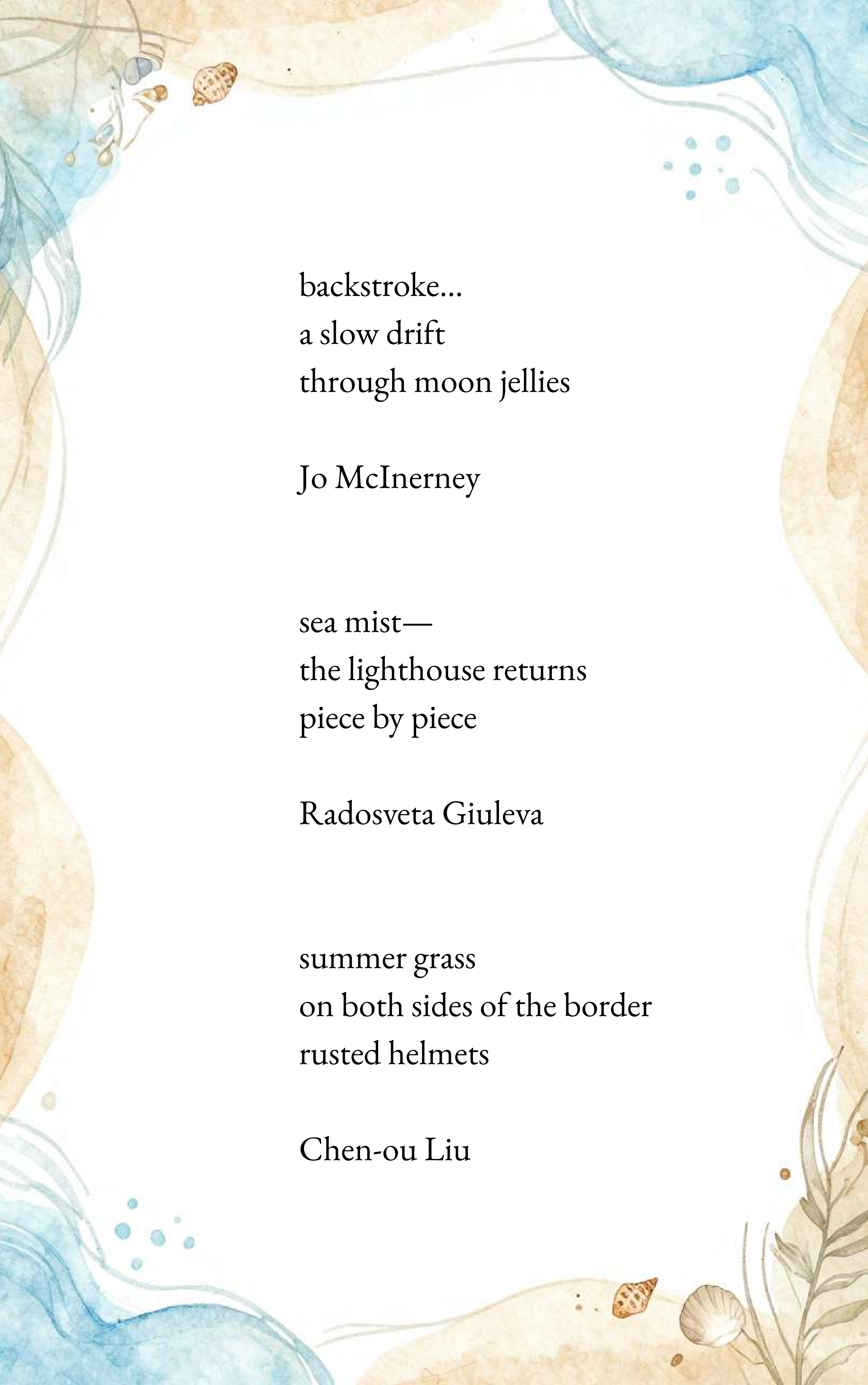
Morgan Ophir

heatwave
the suddenness
of cucumbers

Kathryn P. Haydon

end of day
the sun remains
in a deflated pool

Gareth Nurden



backstroke...
a slow drift
through moon jellies

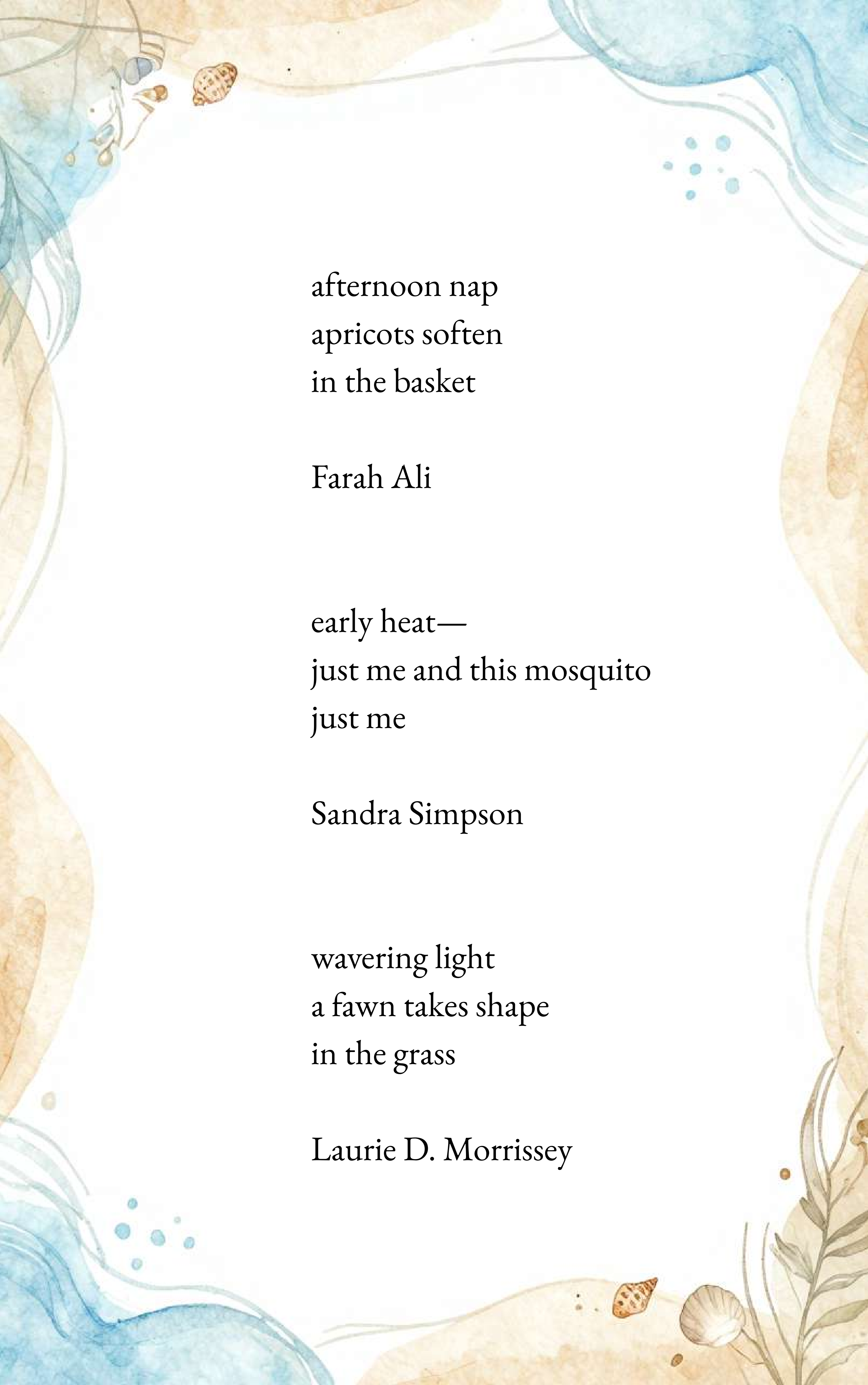
Jo McInerney

sea mist—
the lighthouse returns
piece by piece

Radosveta Giuleva

summer grass
on both sides of the border
rusted helmets

Chen-ou Liu



afternoon nap
apricots soften
in the basket

Farah Ali

early heat—
just me and this mosquito
just me

Sandra Simpson

wavering light
a fawn takes shape
in the grass

Laurie D. Morrissey

A watercolor illustration of a beach scene. In the top left, a child's foot is visible, wearing a sandal. The top right shows blue waves crashing onto a sandy beach. The bottom left features more blue waves. The bottom right shows a sandy beach with seashells and a small plant. The central text is arranged in three groups, each with a title and an author's name.

sunflower field
a child in the backseat
waves

C J Downer

a pause
before exhaling
midsummer's eve

Ann Sullivan

handlebars
the space between
corn rows

Jeff Hoagland