

Josh Mahler

The Stitches Have Come Loose

No matter how far away you are, I fall asleep haunted by your intrusion. Last night we visited the ocean, the details obscure, but we might have dug our toes into the sand and watched waves break and spray mist from worldly travel. After, we strolled along the boardwalk, the sun following our steps like shadows in reverse. Let me reset the scene because I don't believe in dreaming of two dreams at the same time: the two of us sitting at a table in a dive bar, arguing about religion, what Jesus would say if he walked by with a smile on his face and we told him the truth. I remember a band playing songs with strange lyrics, night heavy with heat, thick like an executioner's blade. *And where is Death?* He's at some intersection, taunting everyone with places to be, the cars and trucks and tourists riding bicycles. I imagine him laughing at his own jokes, accepting charity, only to drop the coins like pebbles in the dirt. I shut my eyes, unsure if sleep is enough to heal the scars I no longer love. Confession: the cruelty of undressing alone in the dark, laughter from behind the wall, or I'm just a fool whenever I talk to myself. I'm done asking for your forgiveness.