

Sunrise
by Ingrid Anders

The alarm rings at five am
at Manasquan, on the New Jersey shore.
Two friends and I open our eyes and
press our knuckles into them.

We look at each other.
This is where we failed the past two mornings
when we did not drag ourselves out of bed.

This morning, we pull musky sweatshirts
over uncombed heads
and push toes into grimy sandals.
We slink to the beach, sit down,
and wrap our arms around our knees.

In the dim light, I can distinguish, barely,
the skeleton of the lifeguard chair
from the dark ocean backdrop.
It should be lighter by now.

Damp curls cling to my face.
My upturned palm catches the first drops of rain.
Goose pimples creep up under the skin
on my exposed arms and legs.

Looking out at the horizon,
all color is held captive
by iron clouds.
Sea and sky are one
body of gray.

My friends lose hope and return to the house.
I, drawn to sadness,
watch them amble away
and return my gaze to the east.

It is the summer before when my mother and I
took our dying cat to the animal clinic.
She suggested I say goodbye
in the car.
Instead, I went in
and held my old friend in my arms

as the vet injected the final pain-killer,
that stopped both our hearts
and turned him cold.

A slow inhale fills my lungs with mist
and my mouth with the taste of brine.
My ears take in the quiet hum of waves.
Dawn lumbers uncracked.
My sunrise succumbs
to the silver firmament.

What a disappointment,
and yet,
I won't forget this view.