

I had wanted to come out to my family
between semesters.
But somehow it must've fallen out on the train.
Instead I visited Minnesota, D.C.,
Boston, Chicago.

The pathways are covered by hundreds
of *torī* gates, labyrinthine,
the leaves in sunset.

And I came back to Japan, still laden. The lacrosse team
still sitting on each other's laps,
lifting a spoonful of pudding
to each other's lips.

There's a pond. He ducks out from the gates,
following a firefly path. He steps
around fallen statues of foxes
that lichen the forest floor.
Next to the pond is a building.

And then Vecmun died. I went home again.
After everything was done, the family
had brunch in her old house:
lox and chubs and *rup maiz* and liver and *galert*.
I was clearing plates and
Aunt followed me
into the kitchen. When she bent over to scrape
the food bits into the garbage,
her tail showed.
I rinsed the plates in the sink. She said, *So
when are you going to come out to the family?*

A woman greets him from inside. It smells delicious.
She says, *you must be tired. Have
some fish cake,
some turnip cake, fresh broth to warm you up. Sit outside,
watch the evening blossoms.*

The next morning I meanderingly
broke fast with Mother and it happened.
I could see it lining up like a dead tree; I knew
it was coming down. Mother saw it too—
still made me say it.

He likes how the mustard sticks to his tongue.
The woman brings him tea
and *daifuku*.
He watches the darkness settle, the gates holding
up the night. Fireflies waltz and double
over the pond-mirror.

And I hadn't told Father, about to leave again
for Japan. We ate breakfast together,
Father had to leave
for work and I still hadn't told him. Father was leaving
for work and asked me
about his maps.
I got up from the table
and Father hugged me.
That was all.

He gets up, heads back to the path.
He realizes he never paid and turns around. The building
gone, the fireflies extinguish
one by one. There is no moon.
He cannot even see his breath.
There is no moon.
He cannot even see his breath.