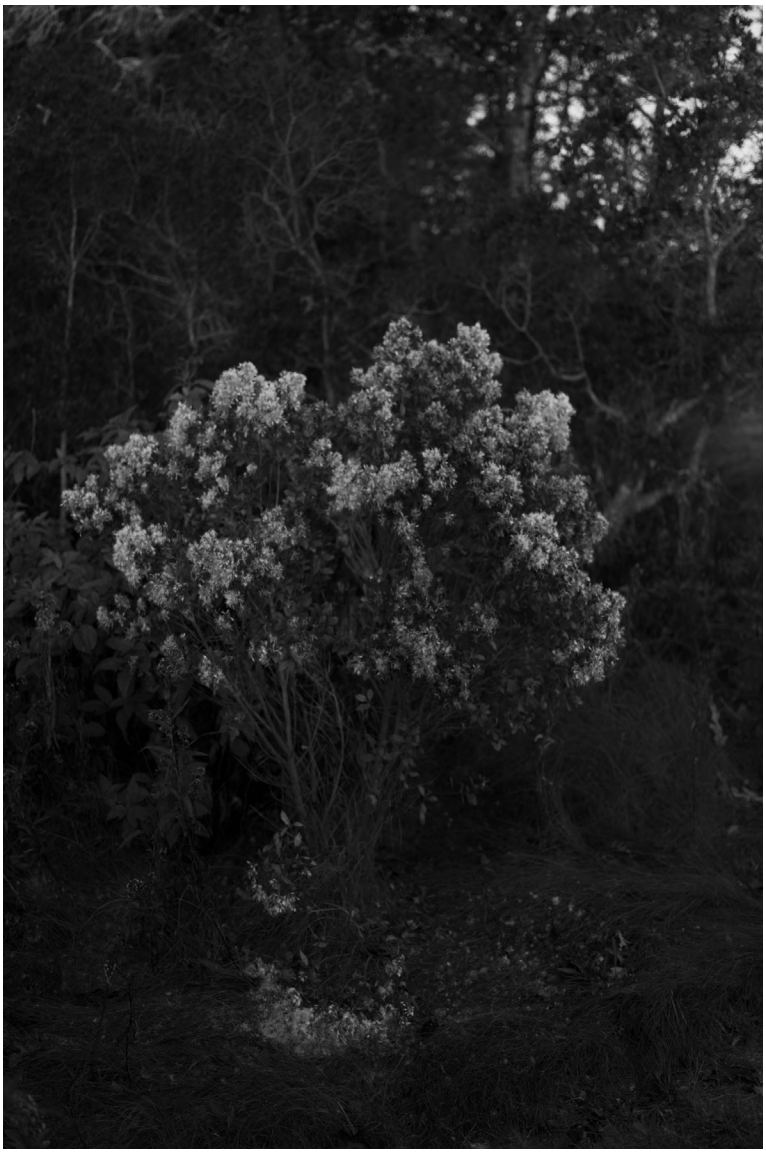
Living Evidence

Photographs by Cat Harris

Evening. She sets out. Behind her, the trodden-on marsh hay redresses like a timelapse of its growing.



I:

Sea Myrtle

Groundsel, consumption weed, saltbush: I go by many names. I hedge seacoasts. In late fall, my downy flower-heads flurry the briny air, drift inland and settle along highways. Hoppered trucks kick up road salt onto my leaves, coat them a dry, filmy white. From salinized tilth where not even an ear of corn sprouts, I do. Inland, inland, I grow more inland. Hand-scatter rock salt over your driveway. Like the parabolized sower. Cure me, cure me. With sea salt. With the brackish tidal marsh salt. With yours—cry near me. Or sweat as Adam from his brow when he snaked furrows, big drops of sweat that fell off his nose and darkly medallioned the ground from which he had been taken. Where, after the flood waters receded, I fruited. And where one-thousand years later, I shaded Lot's wife who, over her shoulder, saw Sodom's ruins mosaicked through my branches.

Into black night she walks. Across the marsh a string lights-outlined cottage: heated filament, slack in the horizon. She turns and faces into the radiation noise-like mist, makes for the teal glow of the water park bloomed up against the dark, passes it and continues till she reaches the

2:

Trees

Out west, they burn on ridges like candelabras. Acres blacken. Hot winds blow waves of flame toward multimillion-dollar mansions. Here, branches rattle like antler-locking bucks. There, gusts strike flint. Surrounds catch. Animals combust. Here, trees have already dropped their leaves, are lit up instead by Christmas displays. Like this one, an angel blowing a trumpet, which, knowing what's happening across the country, evokes the second coming. The fire. The heat warbling above the fire. The smoke above the heat that Jesus, arms flung wide, descends upon as on storm clouds, a sword protruding from his mouth.

Late morning. A clearing. Blue sky, across which clouds are smeared. She thinks about white eraser-wiped chalk on a board. Other metaphors, too. The pale smoke that hovers above green-wood fires. Steam that smokes up from the sweating flanks of an overgalloped horse on cold air, a metaphor so sense-freshening she can almost smell the odors of the various grasses, flowers, and other plants it has flattened with its hooves. The marsh hay, the dropped flowerheads of the sea myrtle, and the

3:

Glasswort

Stamened and carpeled, my flowers cannot be sexed. Not binarily. Yes-no won't suffice. Field-working botanists call me succulent. Call me perfect. In the seventeenth-century, I was known as the plant that *hath no name in English*. When burnt, I yield soda ash. The more salt I've saturated into my body, the more ash I produce, and so the more glass. Glassmakers blow pipes. I bubble out the orange-glowing end, red as I am now. There's some chance the viewfinder through which you observe me was once my jointed, fleshy stems. Fingers beckoning, beckoning, beckoning. To come closer. Focus the aperture, your own finger half pressing the shutter button.

Wait for the cloud shadows to pass. Then snap the photo.