After the Drought

A shift in the air—faint shuffles all around the house, filling the rooms with breathing as if a sovereign set of lungs prowled near

or unfettered senses, sniffing at the skylights, fingering the grass, tasting the dusty steps to my door with a thousand mouse tongues.

Can it be you? Padding down cotton-numb stairs, easing open the door, I hear the rustling that approaches from everywhere.

It is you, raindrop rolling in late for me, after all umpteen acres of dust. Yet I am no longer your immaculate land

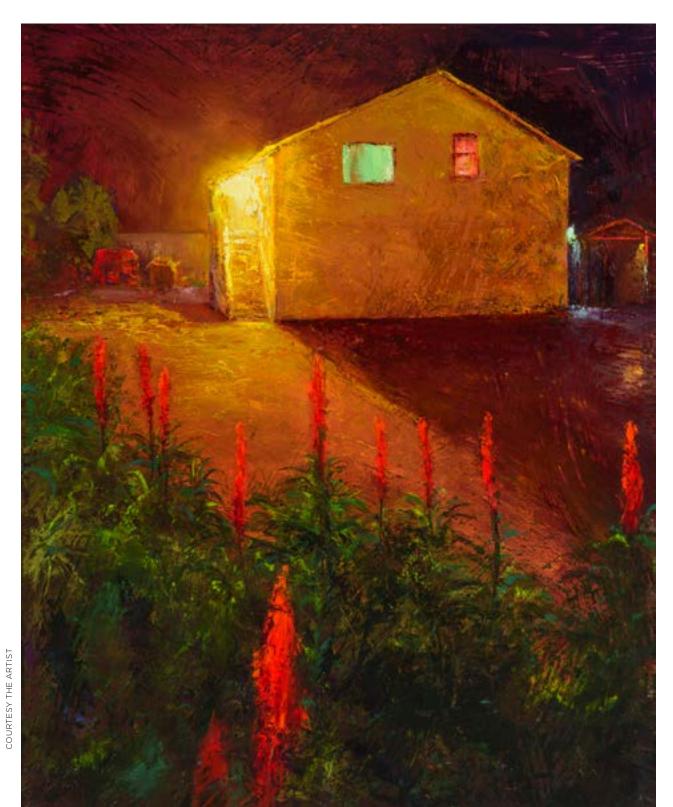
- but grown greaterberserk with wild thorns, fat on dandelion gold. Softly now; mind where your darling foot drops; here

nettles have mined the path, and there my punk-head army bristles about the gate, crowding out your poor amaryllises and anemones.

See? All these succulent beauties bred of thirst. Tough, incurable rhizomes riddling my soul, waiting for your kiss.

ANDREW JACKSON

Night Walk, 2017 Oil on board, 11 x 14 in



Anne Cheilek is a writer, editor, and musician living in Silicon Valley. Her poems have appeared in *The Sand Hill Review, Daphne Magazine, Portside.org*, and elsewhere.