Blue Illusion

Toxic blue-green algae ravages the Gulf, and I am afraid to set my feet in the water. The ocean, a deep cerulean, looks cool and inviting, not at all like a repository of illness and misery. I trudge through the sand, knowing that I, too, look fresh and serene, though a toxic grief flows through me, its waves lapping over my every thought. I keep a safe distance from the water and walk on, hopeful that the warmth of the sand and the rhythm of the surf can keep me a safe distance from myself, if only for a little while.

Coastal Religion

I saw a giant angel carved from an old tree, casting its heavenly golden glow onto the sand. I saw a black Madonna in the middle of town, and I saw Love Is the Greatest painted on a big rock next to a birdbath filled with blue marbles. I saw crosses and Bible quotations on chains and bracelets in the little seaside shops. Then I saw the eyes of a Monarch butterfly who stopped by my tiny house on its way to Mexico to taste the nectar of a red hibiscus—and that was all I needed.

Protection

My tiny house is some distance from the beach, but I don’t mind. To rattle around in a sleeps-six rental cottage would be like ripping shells from the fragile organism we call loneliness, and throwing them into its depths. I want to feel enclosed, like a hermit crab, able to see but not be seen, and to walk slowly and silently through these beach days.

Admonition

Do not squander your sorrows is painted in blue under the glass on the table where I take my seat at the little seaside cafe. I want to believe that it’s a message, but if it is, has the warning come too late? Have I merely collected my sorrows like so many seashells, so that I can put them all in a big glass bowl and admire them while—day after day—I taste the ocean salt of my tears?