

M. Stone

One Foot off the Path

Mid-October morning
wind is brutal enough
to steal breath, render
lips numb.

A tundra-like landscape
surrounds me. Deciduous

trees drop their leaves;
only the evergreens thrive
at this height.

On my climb to the summit,
I spot a Monarch butterfly
astray from its migratory
journey.

Its fiery wings, rivaling
any maple, grow still,
succumbing to the cold.

As I walk the trail winding
through uncultivated forest

I think of abandoning it,
letting the woods swallow me
so the fatal chill can settle
into my bones.

Before returning
to town where a coyote
bounty continues

I pause, smile at the yawning
wilderness, and say

“Another time.”

A bookworm, birdwatcher, and stargazer, **M. Stone** finds inspiration in the day-to-day while living in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains.