This is the year the asters never left. All winter they held on, bulls-eye suns spoked by lavender sparks—something in the air, something changed, that has icebergs drifting the seas like ghost ships. I look up to see the first snow of my son’s life falling— limning each blade of grass, each corner & crease outside, the way grease used to line each whorl & wrinkle on my daddy’s fingers & palms, after a shift at the plant. And this, this is the year his daddy gave up his ghost. We were both a long ways away— how many rivers, how many borders or days, neither of us knows or wants to guess. Neither of us have the language for this. I like to think my Pake met his bride at the end of a long dark aisle, a little light in her eyes to guide his path. Then stepped through to another side. I hope the wounds still somehow sing in that world, as they give way in this one to green shoots, to bud & bloom. I know this is the year that children pan water with potato sacks for cobalt, so our phones might live. I know this is the year boats disappear into the Mediterranean. The western black rhino walked its last. This is the year of the never-ending church service: as long as it lasted, the migrants sheltered there would not be arrested. This the year my son discovered his tongue— sticks it out at me every chance he gets, tongue the size of starfish fingers, the ones they drop to the ocean floor, before collapsing in on themselves, like stars. I know this is every year. Hour between morning & night, asters otherworldly, noctilucent in streetlight— how did they get here? What feathers were buried here, what bones, to give way to such as this? Planted with the ashes of organ grinders, maybe. With the ashes of dogs & monkeys returned from space. Planted by a doge who tried to sail a cello down a canal. Someone who gave up a crown. A drunken opera singer. An angel who buried the last of its memories of God. Petals like these falling flakes, like the confetti that rained down from the terraces of the Guggenheim, a blizzard.
of prescription-size slips, to protest the money behind the museum, money made from the 200 dead a day, 200 overdoses. Almost like a blessing upon the air. I would beg it from anyone, from this winter, though I only have the hem of its cloak, this snow on my palm. I would ask it for my son, daughter. For refugee boats sailing this night, for those crossing a border. It might sound like a vowel I’ve never heard, heaven-sent, almost like an answer. A reckoning. A word returned from the dark. Might sound like *hallelujah*. Might be too soft to hear.