

**RAE GOUIRAND**

**Petrichor**

We count the amount it has not rained  
in days, in inches, in mind: I do not speak to

others if I do not have to, I do not  
pretend. It has not rained, and I do not

wish to discuss my day, or my choices.  
I do not wish to consider choices. The air

is wrong is what I say, there is nothing  
in it, you can feel yourself hanging in your mouth

if you breathe. I say if when I mean  
when or because. I mean the dust on everything.

Everything sticks to everything inside  
of me, indistinguishable from lack of water.

My friend says a grave is the absence of dirt.  
I remember once walking the yard seeing

in the invisible age this box I filled  
with sand my heart. I am sick of saying it—

I am not asking anyone to take on the water.  
I am not asking anyone to take on the air. How

to think of a place needing rain when it feels  
this close to disappearance. A desert is not a lack—

like every living being I used to be one  
younger version of myself. I do not miss but

envy her scent for water, the way  
she divined. What is a grave if you're literal

about it. What is a glass but a vessel we raise.  
I taste the current that travels the air wrong, like

something forgot. When I was a child  
I took petrichor for granted, smelled it freely

through the rust of tinny screen: dust and  
rain-cooled shingle sizzled the clouds moving

through every room like sound. It's not the effect  
I long for but it helps to say it. It helps to say a grave

is the absence of dirt. It helps to say  
it has not rained and we need it, speaking

in the plural, covering the singular as  
the rush of absent things would cover their first sign.