

Ode to Jamaica Pond

City ponds are not only for transit, stillness is not forbidden
A mirror, a refuge, a lung – a perfect place to wander, observe, and anchor.

Runners carve paths through heavy snow
Ice fishers trust the deep chill, patient with the cold
Finding the right corner, out of the wind but catching the sun
Skating the edge when the deep center hardens
The half-frozen water resists, geese riding the jagged rim

Water levels drop and rise with the freezing earth
No longer just a place for the rich to vacation in summer, harvest ice in winter
The water belongs to Boston now
Ward, Leverett, the Arboretum – the Emerald Necklace greens again

Spring runoff fills the banks
The concrete drain becomes an altar, turtles and kids claim it equally, basking
Baby turtles dive when the cold returns without warning

Cygnets hatch and paddle, fragile against everything
Bird flu takes some
Next year, new eggs
Ducks parade their ducklings through the muddy reeds like they invented parenthood
Muskrats vanish mid-stroke, no explanation offered

Angry geese with their children, hissing at strollers
Gaggles of geese parade, no quiet now

The island sits in the middle
Reachable by foot when the water hardens
A dog makes it there alone, owner scrambling close behind
In summer, only by imagination and kayak

Hérons stand like they have appointments they won't explain
Blue jays don't wait for anything
Chipmunks and squirrels hoarding against a deadline only they know
Koi hover below the fishermen, enormous and unbothered

The boathouse, the ranger station, the gazebo — all of it humming
Choirs practicing in open air
Sailboats and kayaks slicing the surface
New parents pushing strollers, sharing shade with the man with the parakeet
People reading, picnicking, celebrating birthdays on the same grass
Generations laying blankets where other generations laid blankets

Every Saturday a 5k, the leaves turning behind the runners
The lantern festival sets the dark autumn water glowing
Fishermen casting from the shore, fly lines arcing

There is a bench here that is funny
Sit on it long enough and a stranger will tell you something true
Regular faces, no names
An invisible community logging laps around the water
Someone on the phone with a best friend, voice carried off by wind
Someone at the exercise station pushing against the fading light
Dogs walking the loops, sniffing at the heels of the living

When the city's chaos becomes too much
A pond is a place where minds come to anchor.