

Winter Smell

It's May and every week
a different flower is blooming.

I see it maybe a handful of times,
stop and smell it twice

if I'm doing a good job
of being present in the world. Now

it's turning brown and falling over. I could breathe
in every last bud and still wouldn't really remember

until next year when I realize
I've been smelling hyacinths for

decades, moments adding up to perhaps
five minutes. I spend longer than that spacing out

on the toilet every day. My mother called again
and I ignored it this time. I already spent

the whole morning waiting for her
to tell me what the Cat Scan found,

and it turns out "abnormalities" isn't code
for "you've got stage 4 lung cancer."

I can't go back and forth like that, preparing
to love her the very best I can in the time she has left

and reassuring myself I can always call her back.
It's January and all the flowers are long gone now.

I mostly say I don't like winter, but at least I've got nothing
to lose when I wake up expecting the sky and the ground

to look the same. Then I see some chickadees
and a cardinal in a pine tree and feel pretty lucky.

I've heard winter has a smell, too,
and someday it won't anymore.

Will I miss it if I can't say what it was?