

2016

## Plum Beach Lighthouse

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### Recommended Citation

Jones, Maggie (2016) "Plum Beach Lighthouse," *Exile*: Vol. 62 : No. 1 , Article 47.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile/vol62/iss1/47>

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## Plum Beach Lighthouse

by Maggie Jones

The lighthouse watches over the coast,  
quietly alert above my bed. Drowsy waters  
ripple in the shadows cast by clouds at dawn.  
After the diagnosis my grandfather painted  
lighthouses along the New England coast

from Connecticut to Maine. His goal was one  
for each of the six months the doctor gave  
him, but six years later one was hung  
in every room of the house, and beacons

poked out of stacks of frames in the corners  
of his paint-splattered workshop. Saturday  
mornings he would check the tides and drive  
down to the shore with his easel and palette  
permanently dyed with shades of blue  
and yellow. On the better days he spent

hours on the beach in his floppy canvas hat  
and pinstriped suspenders, and I'd beg  
to build sandcastles with him and hoped  
he'd teach me a new brush stroke on a blank

canvas. Before my mother let me leave  
she lathered me in sunscreen, painting  
over my back and neck with wide strokes,  
carefully filling in every curve of my body.

On the shore the lighthouse watched over  
the coast, and when the sun had set over  
the cold Rhode Island waves my grandfather  
kept blending the gold of the beacon's light  
into the navy of the horizon.