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.