

Sirens on the Fourth of July

On the balcony a sway of three girls shoulder-to-shoulder facing out in dresses offering little resistance to where the river bends, hair abuzz, sparks from their bare arms dotting the violet sky. A smell of small fires breathing air. It is the song of their backs strung with spines that irradiates the room, and doesn't care who hears it. I watch how the harbors of their necks are made navigable by the phosphors they shed, and mourn for any who can't find refuge there. Though I can't attest to their innocence, it is to their benefit they don't know about the wings, each vein intact, the stirred weight still folded beneath their dresses, or the distress caused by river light breaking through the cracks at their feet. Sea lions slip from the rocks. Ships' engines slow to a moan. It is futile to try turning sailors back once they ache to warm their hands by the fires on shore. The girls' waists are perfect. There is damage where we are drawn to the flame. If they want whatever they ask for it is only because they want—no spleen, no undercurrents. For now, they don't need to bow from the hip to hear the river say what it says to their hair.