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Lineage

Justine Claire

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LINEAGE

Justine Claire

"Everything that can be invented has been invented."

Charles H. Duell, Commissioner, U.S. Office of Patents, 1899

This town is a glowing disco ball refracting
the mottled and ruby rot of doctors and lawyers and
sons and daughters of invisible immigrants. The shards of light slice
the faces of Alana Weisberg and Debbie Feldman and West Bloomfield and the
painted women spend their husbands' money, the nickels, dimes,
plastic, leather checkbooks screaming for a better cause.
Growing up like that made us pot-bellied pigs waiting to be fed,
expecting the silvery touch of Tiffany's, sliding the perfect chains between
our hands and around our wrists, around our necks and eventually
this will choke us and this will set us free.
Once, we exposed our soft underbellies smelling of stepping-stones,
the rough stones on the bottom of the quiet lake by my house, a half a mile
from my house, scraping
feet if you didn't wear aqua-socks.

"Mazel tov, my little Justinelah!"

Bastardized Judaism, the chanting from the beemah is
white noise, we tune it out,
daydream of the after-party,
thirteen-year-olds with forest braces avoiding each other and
crashing into one another whirling through legs and volatile self-confidence.

Baurch ata adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam—

Our great-grandparents died in the terrible flames,
the gas punching holes in children,
children's children, children's children's children. "If the Shoah hadn't happened,
there'd be millions more Jews."

We go out for sushi, head to the mall, and instead of buying I fly over them all,
breathing in the veils and tasting their pomegranate waking sleep,
showering them with awareness.

We are ridiculous in our excess! We know! We care! We see!

I crash-land into that lake and for a moment I remain below the surface of the water, open my eyes and the underwater world is made out of paper-cuts, fifties and hundreds, and seaweed is long tentacles of paper, receipts itemized shtetl by burning shtetl.