

Hold Up The Sky

Ruth Niemiec

The back of my knees against the cool, smooth, sharp-edged concrete steps at your parents' house. Quiet whispers and muffled laughter into the back of each other's hands, trying not to wake the sleeping.

It feels like a long time now when you pushed your palms against my palm. I watched the glitter on your forehead, the sweat of a day, down by the river and we smoked secret cigarettes, and you blew rings and blew my mind.

I willed it to last forever. You.

I remember you living, remember you breathing, remember you laughing into eternity. The echo endless and spiralling.

Under the fig tree, under the streetlights, under the view of them, under the moon, grand and swollen, but nothing matched the hands expanding in my heart for you.

Coming home felt no different this year. Coming home felt like coming home to you. Coming home didn't feel blue, and when I arrived at my parent's backyard, the water jetting from the sprinklers bled sepia. The dahlias were different. My mother's eyes full of pain for me and you and everyone that you knew.

I rode past your parents' house, but the porch light was off.

I wish I could come back to you. Come home to you, feel the cold with you, under the moonlight, standing beside you. I'll be leaving without you and with you.