

Twins

I toss and turn in twisted sheets as a young woman spins through the sky.

I've been sick for a day,

Photos of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire caught in my breath

Can't fall asleep

Brain burning with noise and thought

And pictures of sidewalks too thin to catch a falling body.

I want the fever to let me go

So I imagine waves of nausea

And ride them,

Hoping to fall off the other side of the crest,

As a woman flies toward the sidewalk

Painted red with flames.

I wake up in an ash-filled room

Filled with burning fabric swinging from the rafters

And singing bones.

The air is thin

So I rush to an open window

To catch my breath

Where I find an almost complete shirtwaist

Folded neatly

As if she pulled it off the machine in the middle of the last stitch

And placed it there, carefully, before she jumped.

I reach out for the shirtwaist so I can finish it for her
But, as I pick it up,
It bursts into flames.
I close my eyes
Breathe out the last of my old breath
And place the almost complete, burning shirtwaist on me.

Nausea swims through my skin
My hair turns to flame
And I dance across the ash
Screaming her name,
Which is also my own.

Dawn spreads over me
And, as sleep lets go,
I catch her eyes
In the half light.

I don't want to wake up- I want to swim with her across the sky,
So I reach out to catch her
But she doesn't want to be caught
Because even my hands would be ground.

She died years ago, almost a hundred now,

and she's done with that.

Now she is only flying

Will MacAdams

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