

Poem

## Sirens

Who could blame us, friend, almost-sister,  
when we woke up on separate islands  
where our unique monsters bred,  
unrecognizable to each other?

This was not supposed to be part of the story,  
crashing and burning yes, but being in our own darkness,  
no. I thought growing up was about restraint,  
how the hero Odysseus would rather strap himself to his boat

than be ruined by those beautiful women.  
In my apartment now, I look over the winter trees  
at what I couldn't see then, millions of islands like ours,  
that for all our childhood sufferings we were unspecial,

the demons in my jungles, the froth-mouthed chimeras  
in yours that made you slice your skin  
in neat, parallel lines, you promising you'll stop and  
you almost did. I should think that the destruction

wasn't your fault, that a child learns about it  
while eating raspberries—  
place a soft body against your tongue, bear down  
until the sweetness dries up and the seeds turn to dust.

Instead I think we lost our childhoods alone.  
What I don't say:  
Some days now I stare out over a blank ocean  
and see nothing. A dullness clouds me

and pulls. Here the story gets turned around,  
you with healed scars and me on a flat shore, numb.  
There is no good ending I can write for old stories,  
no real beauty told in pain and if the pain looks beautiful

it's because they're faking it.  
Odysseus ties himself up then pulls against the restraints,  
almost breaking himself, not because he wants the women,  
but because he wants something

to strive for. All his friends are dead.  
Let's talk about how you saved yourself.  
Odysseus loving the Sirens  
for the sake of loving something.

The heroes we dream up  
with rope marks on their wrists,  
eating breakfast now or picking up the mail,  
the ones we imagine made it home.

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