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after, tigers

every night the girl's options wave in the dark like dirty raincoats.

the girl remembers her heart in the theater like a problem she is trying to solve.

it was not supposed to look like that.

every year the girl grew there had always been new advice. those words used to be round at the edges:

count to four, and again, and go get 'em but don't really.

and that was how it was supposed to be, but now people keep going to higher and higher extremes.

rip 'em apart,
someone says,
commit murder,
and
pull the lettuce

of their flesh apart like lightning,

make sure

you don't go

anywhere alone.

the girl counts what everyone says like beads on her glass necklace.

make sure you don't go anywhere alone. at night every room crawls:

velvet seats, bad skin like an onion's, his face

becoming pinched as it got closer.

the girl

remembers her heart spread out on movie theater seats,

learning how her body could be wrecked.

here is a girl being established by light, ligature.

the girl wakes up needing a different ending:

twelve tigers in glass beads who do not want her to die ordinary.

everything is holy and possible.

everything the girl remembers happens in reverse:

a seat that sticks to her back in the car, the light shining in from the windows,

the mother and father who ask her to choose better,

but here is the girl trying to choose better, and it isn't working at all.

here is the girl, alone,

like light, like that.

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