

Why Aren't There Fireflies

by Doug Bond

Julie's moving a little crooked, and for a moment I want to steady her, slow down. I wonder if one will ever take. She's never been here this time of year. Doesn't know the way rain comes in summer, taking all day to build. A firefly lights up and disappears in the ferns along the roadside. We're walking quickly again. I'm trying for long deep breaths.

Mom's doctor had called at six am from ICU to give Dad an update. There were complications. Hematologist brought in from New Haven. We'd been at the hospital since we got in. It's been a long day. Julie needs sleep.

"We should probably head back," I say, "I think my Dad wants us to watch something with him." I'd seen the Victor Borge tape lying out on the table next to his coaster. Coming up the driveway to the house, the blue light of the TV reflects through the front window. Audience laughter and piano sounds mingle and pitch through the screen door.

I remember a Fourth of July as a kid, running around the house, my hands full with sparklers, being chased by our dogs. I want to tell Julie, but she is staring across the field. There are hundreds of fireflies crackling along the tree line and the old stonewall.

"It's not fair! Why the fuck aren't there fireflies in San Francisco..." Her voice starts to break.

I tell her to hold on and turn towards the open garage and make my way in the dark, past the rakes and shovels, back to the shelves, and to the web-skinned small pots, the loose-lidded glass jars.

