five minutes

by Glynnis Eldridge

I. Goth

A middle school trend. As it was, everyone who was on the inside of the in-crowd wore all black everything. UFO pants, chains, a splash of pink or some other bright color somewhere to counteract the black and dark blues. The intensity of embracing and of becoming and of being "goth" as a preteen meant remembering how not to laugh (at things that were happy) and how to keep from smiling and how to remember to feel any way better than blue. There were goth boys to crush on too, who didn't need that splash of some bright color because blonde hair was a fine alternative. My goth boy crush was Paul, who kissed my friend on a Tuesday in the courtyard of the apartment complex next to our school. He kissed me on the cheek the summer before I moved away. I thought I was suddenly happy. He was sad and mean. I wore my shirt with the broken heart design and a big blue bra.

II. Firefly

I ate bug pops with my mom and my brother while standing in the street looking up at the sky at twilight, watching fireflies blink on blink off under a fog of bats that chirped and swooped. We shared these picnics not too far from the beach. There were rumors of fireflies in jars, kitschy, substantial substitutes for night lights, or bedside table lamps. This idea was appealing to me when I was younger, but the amount of fireflies I'd ever catch in one jar was never enough to light a room. There was one night when I caught a cicada and thought it a suitable substitute for a sleepy time tape. That summer there were cicada shells clinging to every tree and thing that rose straight up out of the ground. “They are much older than you,” my mother told me. When I woke up the morning after catching that purring thing, the jarred cicada was still and silent and fell to the ground when I opened the jar, pulled it out and placed it on a bush's limb.

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III. Sandcastle

We used to spend the summers at my grandparents' beach house in Delaware, a mile from the shore. We would ride our bikes to the edge of the east coast, or walk, and take time to observe things like snake skeletons, fiddler crabs, giant bird eggs hidden in pale pine needles. I don't remember spending much time building sand castles, except drizzled ones, wet sand piling up like near extinct structures of a culture remembered maybe only by my mother via graduate school art history courses, photographs of far off lands and architecture taller than the tallest human. At the beach my relatives drank sodas and ate ice cream under blue umbrellas, reclining, bright pink blonde lobster humans, slathered up in sun cream.