

palisades

by Glynnis Eldridge

Driving up to the Palisades after 9/11 for a meteor shower, roused out of dreams by mom's fingers tickling your feet, a yellow lightbulb leaking in between the door and the frame and the wall and the floor, soft voices on the radio down the hall, the smell of hot chocolate drifts in and settles on your bed like another blanket.

Sending messages to the dead and missing detailing how much you miss them and the things you think about when you think about them.

Crying in the car through the Palisades with Mom and a man who thinks he knows it all. He plays a song about women getting stabbed and raped in bushes. Your hands are drenched from what runs out of your nose when your eyes get glassy. You lick them clean.

Recounting your week or two in Colorado when you were 19 and "emotionally unstable;" they picked you and your bags up in a white van. They offered you Oreos and let you choose the music. You said you liked Neil Young, Heart of Gold. It was all you could think of. You remember them joking, lightening the weight of the situation. You don't remember what they said. At the office, you called your mom and spoke when your mouth wasn't full of salt water, when your throat let go of its lumps. She said you weren't allowed to leave the woods. She said your only other option would be to peel plaster-stiff ancient wallpaper and paint your room for three months. You found a plane ticket to New York City. You moved in with your dad. You relinquished your scholarship and listened to your dad's stories about bad sunburns instead of getting more of your own. For the next few months you pressed on bubbles that had formed behind your knees from the simple act of forgetting to apply sunscreen before a hike in high altitudes.

