

The places we used to roam

I've been there, hanging out with the dwarf at the Palisades circus, and with the clown with tragic eyes smoking a cigarette on the roof of the flying Zamboni. I've been there, in another life, a memory, a photograph, a dream. There's nothing romantic about that.

And the angel perched on the statue watching us intently is actually a fat fly on the icon framed under glass in the Colentina slum, rubbing its legs and staining the Virgin Mary. And we mistakenly think we see a beauty mark on her face, or a tear.

I've been there, where the enormous slugs crawl across the sky and slime the moon. We used to tie our rowboats to the lamp posts, and they floated all night next to our windows, waiting for us to jump in. We never did.

The places we used to roam are still there. Our memories are still there, eating crepes at Luna Park by the blinking eyes of the woman with the nose rotten by rust, spinning metal cars on her skirt. There is nothing romantic about the powder sugar that falls like snow and clings to my only dress and the sour cherry syrup drop about to fall and ruin it.

The boats are still tied to the lampposts on our street, waiting for our younger versions to jump in and row away. Come with me. I know this place.

The large moth that flew in

It poked me in the cheek, trying to fly into my mouth, seeking refuge as if it were a word I uttered long time ago and now awakened from the dead.

Moth, from Old English *moththe*, Middle Dutch *motte*, Old Norse *motti*—were you a sound from sleep, a muffled cry? Were you spoken in error in the wrong ear, unintelligible, soft? Were you lost, looking for meaning down my throat?

Were you the comet moth, the black witch, the luna or the Gypsy, the emperor's gum, good god, the dark dagger, dusky brocade, the death's hand, the flame, the ghost, the shark, the snout, or the true lover's knot? Were you November, or winter?

I'll never know. I picked you up and threw you out into the night.