

You cannot remember when you have never been at war with your own body. Your parents sold themselves off bit by bit, piece by piece, to give you what you need to keep fighting until they finally got jobs where they didn't have to sell themselves off bit by bit, piece by piece. When you had friends once, they would ask why your dad only has one eye, a hand missing three fingers, why your mom only has one leg, why she always wears long sleeve shirts in this perpetual summer, and you told them they lost them in a war fighting for freedoms that let us keep breathing in the smog that the right god exhaled onto this world. They stopped being your friends once they caught you coughing up something oily for the first time, as if you could pass on your tumors through blood and spit and skin, your defective body infecting them with your defectiveness. You forgot though how the tumors feeding from your body saved you that day when your "friends" discovered your defect and tried to kill you, tried to bury you alive in the sandbox adjacent to the playground. The tumors did what you could not do. They guided your hand into one of your friend's throat, the boy who oozes now, but didn't ooze then. Your other "friends" stopped trying to kill you, trying to bury you alive in the sandbox adjacent to the playground when the tumors used your eyes to look at them like you could open their throats. Though they saved you that day, you keep quelling their bloodlust with pill after pill after pill.

You cannot remember when you have never been at war with your own body, when your legs were not plagued with psoriasis, when you walked instead of hopped. Unlike the boy who coughs up oil, you figured out how to make yourself a myth, a myth boys died for while sailing the seas, how they would fall off their ships and wait for your adopted kind to save them from drowning and would realize too late when your kind never came, their lungs filling with saltwater and panic, a myth boys that would make landlocked boys chase after you, even though you did not know or want them to chase after you, you just wanted to be something more than a girl with fused legs and psoriasis.

The first time you told your best friend, the girl with the melting face, the truth about your fused legs and psoriasis, it was during a sleepover in third grade, shortly after you came out to the your class that you were really a mermaid, and your best friend, the girl with the melting face, backed your claim. When you told her the truth, she said it was ok for her to lie how she