The Larger

By Joanie Mackowski

I don’t know how it happened, but I fell—and I was immense, one dislocated arm wedged between two buildings. I felt some ribs had broken, perhaps a broken neck, too; I couldn’t speak. My dress caught bunched about my thighs, and where my glasses shattered there’d spread something like a seacoast, or maybe it was a port. Where my hair tangled with power lines I felt a hot puddle of blood.

I must have passed out, but when I woke, a crew of about fifty was building a winding stairway beside my breast and buttressing a platform on my sternum. I heard, as through cotton, the noise of hammers, circular saws, laughter, and some radio droning songs about love. Out the corner of one eye (I could open one eye a bit) I saw my pocketbook, its contents scattered, my lipstick’s toppled silo glinting out of reach. And then, waving a tiny flashlight, a man entered my ear. I felt his boots sloshing the blood trickling there. He never came out. So some went looking, with flares, dogs, dynamite even: they burst my middle ear and found my skull, its cavern crammed with dark matter like a cross between a fungus and a cloud. They never found his body, though. And they never found or tried to find an explanation, I think, for me; they didn’t seem to need one.

Even now my legs subdue that dangerous sea, the water bright enough to cut the skin, where a lighthouse, perched on the tip of my great toe, each eight seconds rolls another flawless pearl across the waves. It keeps most ships from wrecking against my feet. On clear days, people stand beside the light; they watch the waves’ blue heads slip up and down and scan for landmarks on the facing shore.

Source: Poetry