

## TAR BEACH

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*Patrick Carrington*

Saturdays weren't black tie affairs in Brooklyn.  
We wore no socks and spit  
in the face of bosses,  
did naughty things  
you don't do in tuxedos or tweed.

Girls dressed in skimpy bikinis they hid  
in low dresser drawers  
where the corkscrewed backs  
of their grandmothers couldn't bend.

The roofs were beaches. We basted  
in baby oil and iodine, higher  
than the treetops. The sand was dark  
as licorice at midnight, soft as nose putty.  
Our bare feet stenciled in the lines  
that were our lives. Pigeons became gulls,  
nesting on the story of our secrets.

There was Rosie, skin like the butterscotch  
taffy of boardwalks we couldn't afford  
to reach. On an easel she invented our oceans,  
her city arms the sweeping curl  
of a northeast wind. And us, entwined  
like a sheepshank, sweating  
as if our bodies were made of the sea.  
She spread oils to anoint the salty waters

of our dreams, turned the few stars  
we could see to a galaxy  
and we had so many  
to answer our wishes at night. A lion

to make us brave, crabs and ladles  
for our hunger. And another to the north  
for direction. We were alone but never lost.

The only extraordinary thing  
I've ever witnessed  
happened there, as her hands gifted me  
a climax of sky. All the light there was  
rushed toward her. I swear  
I saw the milky way fold into her eyes.