

Ayla pedaled through syrup. Her legs had turned to rope and she couldn't breathe from the cramp in her lungs. Her lungs surrounding her heart, designed to protect her heart. Nothing can protect a heart.

Where was she riding to? The memory of his words burning into her marrow made the earth spin off its axis and flung her out into the atmosphere where she floated like an empty husk with no direction, no purpose. She could ride off the end of the island and into the ocean. She could ride along the bottom of the sea and meet her father who would take her in his arms and hold her. Simply hold her.

The moon rising over the tops of the trees was so immense it was going to fall down. To be crushed by the weight of it, what a relief that would be. To be killed by the moon is preferable to living with the memory of him.

Someone called and waved, but the liquid in her eyes blurred the light of the colossal moon. She rode toward its glow until her bike turned to jelly and became tangled in her body. How hard the earth was and where did this blood on her knee come from? She found herself in her front yard. Something important to her hit the ground and cracked but she didn't stop. Nothing was important now.

'Mum?'

Her Mum would put a band-aid on her knee. Her Mum would cry for the wound she knew was too big to bandage, the wound wedged behind her lungs, where her heart once was.

'Mum?'

The house was empty. She sank into her bed, the despair made her bones too heavy as the sun was eaten by the moon. Grappa had known all along, Riley was Far Dorocha. He had played and she had danced, willingly following him into the abyss where nothing but sorrow grew, wild and free.

