

somewhere sirens

by Joyce Liu

in dreams it is like choking on water.
in dreams i can ask for anything i want
so i do,
so i do,
so i ask over and over,
pilgrim at altar / child at your feet,

(in waking i do not know how to own the image of supplicant when
kneeling has always been the cold edge of a filial knife but in dreams –
in dreams i am good at kneeling.)

until the words stop flooding from between my teeth
and dam up inside,
knocking their bony knees and elbows together,
craning for a good look at the show.
distantly, the crunch of cartilage beneath someone's feet.
somewhere
sirens.

in dreams i ask for the little things.
the good mornings,
the folded blankets,
the sunlit afternoons on grassy hills.
i ask for hash browns and pancakes.
chicken broth and someone to eat my egg yolks
because i only eat the whites.
it's not that i want you to live off my leftovers,
it's the exchange of a core,
and i can't give you my heart to eat so i will pretend to hate the yolks
and you can be full.
my mother always told me that the yolks were the best part of the egg,
and i want you to have all the best parts of me
but i have nothing to give,
so in my dreams you take the crumbling yolk from my fingers and swallow it whole.

in dreams i am always enough.
the pencil does not break.
the steering wheel does not slide right through my hands,
leaving a trail of stinging skin.
there are no dead squirrels on the road,
no dead conversations left draped around my shoulders like an ex-boyfriend's burnt jacket.
the right words flash on a teleprompter in my mind.
in dreams i am always enough
and i never get it wrong

and i always, always wake up.

in dreams it's you in pieces.

it's your hands braced against the hardwood your millennial pink sweater folded in half your glasses teetering on the edge of the desk your shoes wedged against the doorframe your shoulders brushing the door –

in dreams there's a ghost of you on the pavement but never a body.

i wander up and down the streets we grew up on,
climb up the slide,
sit in the barren bushes and wait to get caught.

in dreams i never get caught even though i deserve it.

in dreams i am hiding

and seeking

and hiding

and seeking

and dreaming

and dreaming

and dreaming

and

