

Islands, Cliffs, My Sister by Bri Wilson

We hovered on a cliff — departure — so we went to the water
after the sunlight had left, sparing the moon.

Our steps tumbled over an army of rocks,
and the whispering stars waited for us to stand in our skin
on the empty beach, the waves' gentle hush
luring us into the lake, me and my sister,

our splashes puncturing the silence. My sister
and me, bodies like knives cutting through the water,
our fingertips slicing the surface, the hush
scattering like droplets. We were watched by the moon,
following our feet shearing sand, the legion of rocks
defeated. The stars' whispers traced our hair, our eyes, our skin.

We dove into the cool wet and the cool wet dove into our skin.
Breaths caught, suspended, I held mine and so did my sister
in a world of condensed scope: sand, sky, lake, rocks:
every familiar and unfamiliar inch of us swallowed by water
every familiar and unfamiliar inch of us swallowed by the hush.
We were pulled into the depths by the light of a moon
that made everything glistening and eternal. The moon

and the lake softened and and renewed us, our skin
brightened with assurance, our hot hearts cooled in the hush.
I watched the enduring waves bear away from me my sister,
turning us into islands, rising. The immense water
wrapping its arms around us, a shield from the biting rocks.

If we had become islands, rising — battalions of rocks
casting themselves into orbit, the gracious moon
circuiting earth in a slow spectral dance, and the water
shaken and flung like unwanted rain from our skin.
Lake Michigan watching a fledgling atoll and its sister
bloom in the bay, bearing a quiet summery hush.

But we were created to dive from cliffs — and inside the hush
we pulled ourselves from smooth lake to cantilevered rocks,
where we realized how we were less and more and my sister
tied the towel under her arms, her body hidden from the moon.
We slipped from the beach, the waves slipping off our skin,
and slipped into an emergence, bright, as we left the water.

Our moon-soaked skin remembers the water,
seeks the architectural hush buried in the rocks,
the breath of the lake still expanding in me and my sister.