

*Shells*

Each shell is a spiral staircase you have climbed. A hermit crab you glued a hook to and leashed with yarn to walk in the yard like an intelligent, trainable pet. You could connect two shells with string and play telephone with the opposite shore or your childhood self. What could occupy these tiny cones but a tongue, a long slip of meat? Shells pointy enough you could stab someone, as long as you stood close and didn't wish to do any real harm. The fact is, today you are happy. Only your daughter is near in her winter puffer but feet bare in the lake. She kneels to stroke green algae clinging to a rock like the pelt of a drowned animal. You wouldn't know if the telephone was working because your child self is too shy to speak. Without its tongue, what remains of the shell is the resonator. The wind passing through makes a vibrating engine of music. Your daughter climbs the lifeguard tower. The song in your hands is quiet, but today you can hear the tiniest of voices, the miniature piccolo trumpet, smaller than a fingernail, high-pitched, hysterical, and wild.