In this week’s poem Stuart Kestenbaum of Deer Isle tells a tale of adolescent desire, a moth, and a mysterious light that burns inside him.

The Light
by Stuart Kestenbaum

A Camel-smoking teenager, I have just returned from New York City with my friend Ellen, she of the wispy blonde hair in her eyes and the sophisticated laugh, when a moth dives deep into my throat, so that I can’t talk or swallow. We are on the way to her house, for what I pray will be love and I can’t even tell her what has happened, I just stand there in the mercury vapor light on South Orange Avenue until we part and I walk home.

The day in New York with the visits to her genteel friends, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Art Students League and the exotic promise of the train station all behind us, I knew I just wanted a girl to put in my life to make me whole and instead I swallow a moth, the brown and white moth that circles endlessly around the glow, that can burn itself on the candle of desire. It must have been after the light that was inside me, the light that even after all these years I have not yet seen or understood.

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