

Old Stories

by Janet Joyner

It isn't as if you didn't know the old stories,
the fate of feathers and wax too near the sun;

hadn't heard, hadn't read of odysseys among
sirens and bewitchers, hadn't sung enough opera

to beware of the high notes and leggy blonds;
as if what history and your moma said could ever

stir enough dread to keep you from that dell with the first snow
falling on your tongues, and Helga, in her window, fiddling

away at Tristan and Isolde, wafting a coverlet
for your first bed of hot grass leaping up against the stars;

as if her standing on your feet standing in the snow
could ever slow the flame burning Troy to the ground.