



Mary Hamilton

FLASH
FLICKER
FIRE

It's been a long time in shadow, she says. It's time to find a light. You gotta find a light and you gotta take that light and shine it on the world. But nobody, and I mean nobody, knows how the flame is gonna be lit. So we crash into each other to make sparks.

Where we come from, there ain't no sunshine. There ain't no light. Maybe we knew it once, maybe when we were young, but we forget how it feels. We forget what it means. Light and dark and all things are one to us now and we don't know how to start over. We don't know how to start from here. Nobody knows, she says, that's why you gotta make it. Make it yours. It's in you, she says, you just gotta find it. You just gotta find a light. You gotta find that light and you gotta take that light and shine it on the world. So we look up and out and it's not there. We look over and over and it's not there. We look under our feet and we think, maybe if we close our eyes and put our hands on pavement to feel vibration, maybe we can remember. We think, if we lie down, if we lie all the way down, if we stretch out, if we put our skin down, if we put our skin to pavement and if we feel vibration, if we feel it, maybe we can start here. We feel rhythm here. We feel hammers hitting and we feel



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Mary Hamilton is an optician in Chicago where she is also currently in the MFA in writing program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her favorite novel is *The Monster at the End of this Book*.



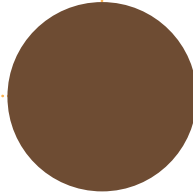
But we got problems. Problems binding us. Problems holding us under. Problems, she says, don't let them dig you down. And it's tricky, she says, but everyone's got problems. But, the threat, we say. What

shatters. That sound that shakes, rattles, ricochets and and shout like this and spin like this to make that we step like this. We turn like this and pop like this the rhythm will lead us to light, she says. So we step, follow and we make sound to trace. The hints behind it, we never wanna forget again, so we make beats to own light. We want light! we say, and when we get to if you want light, you gotta make light. Make your this. We step like this. We move like this. She says, this. We jump and land on our feet and we twist like boom, a tick, a rumble shake swing and we rise like when we hit. We hit. And we rise like this. We are a with open palms. We shake like this. We rise like this back together then. We hit ground. We slap sidewalk collages and the streets were yellow brick broken put remember the days of sun when the walls were color and the days they done it. And when we feel this we jumping, we feel beats bopping and chests popping scaccato steps and we feel elbows swinging and knees

if, we say. Because all we know is shadow. All we know is this brick, this cement, this city. What happens, we say. When we break the dark? It's been too long, she says. It's been too long in shadow. It's time to find a light. You gotta find a light and you gotta take that light and shine it on the world. You gotta break it out. What you gotta do is, you gotta illuminate until you put everything and everyone in the same, hot light. That's why you gotta move. So we crash into each other to make sparks.

It's dark in the city, you have to make your own fire, so we crash into each other to make sparks. We twist on the pavement to make flame. We step, we step like this to make bricks break. We move, we move like this to make flash flicker fire. We glimmer glint gold. We shimmer jump pop. The dark is breaking and we're this close to burning when we move like this and all the people, they shout, and their voices, their voices make like ice in the cold. And when that ice, that breath, hits the air it thunders and it makes like snow. And that snow falls down on us, it falls down in comet colors, it falls down heavy, thick and true. It falls down up and sideways. It cuts our skin. It is snow like ice and we are hot and we are moving. We

We will be light. We will be light. We tell her that we will be the light. We go on and on like this. On and on and on on on. We step like this. We move like this so all the city can see and all the people can see and all the world can feel the fire we made.



are moving like this and we are bleeding and we are bruised and we are spinning in the spinning swirl of sleet and snow. Stay warm! she says. She says, you gotta stay warm. She is singing, but in the snow, her voice is echo. Her voice is glory glory hallelu. Her voice is pulled back behind the sound of the ice and the sleet and the snow. That snow falls down up and sideways and we slide. We slide like this. It's cold down here. Real cold. The wind and the snow cut our fire. Cool our burn. Choke our flames. It's dark here, we say. If you want light, you gotta make light, she says. If you don't make light, you will end up in chains. We don't wanna be tied down, we wanna reach up, we wanna push and pull. We wanna change the atmosphere. Then you gotta stand tall, she says. Or sit the fuck down.

We will stand up firm, we say. We will brush that snow off our shoulders and we will stand on our own and we will reach up, we will touch sky and we can't stop, we won't stop till we melt this ice. We will thaw this city, we say. And we will explode from this dark, this alley, and we will make sound. We will make song. We will make light. We will turn like this and we will step like this and we will be the center. Because