

Rita Marley and the Glitter Trail

Brelyn Jefferson

My hands gripped the knobby wrists of girls
with long hair and bare legs. Dragged to the door,
hissing and cursing, they suctioned their glittered
palms to every surface they could. I shirked

daggered stares as I swept the last of them away. “Ladies,
Bob needs to rest for the show tomorrow,” I crooned.
But they wanted to soak up his light longer,
and I could hardly blame them. He thanked me

for removing the whirling swarm of lace and silk, heavy
with makeup and perfume, their thin waists and skin
much lighter than mine. Years I spent that way
with my eyes boring holes in the floorboards each night

he called me for help. I trudged back to my room in lead slippers,
noting the glitter trail snaked down the hall. The discerning
mark of Bob’s women dusted every hotel in every city,
every stage dressing room, every tour bus.

From my bed I watched my babies drift to sleep, wrapped in
Europe’s night, cuddled and cramped on a pullout sofa
bundled in scratchy, once-white hotel linens,
their dancer feet bruised black from a night onstage.

Bob’s guitar whispered my favorite hymn through the wall,
like waves lapping at the tender shore after a hurricane,
and I slipped a secret smile from somewhere deep in
my chest and almost felt it swallow up the heartache.