

Beach Walk

Tania Runyan

“Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. . .” –Esther 2:2-4

I wore my leopard bikini like the manikin
at Bullock’s: shoulders back, breasts out,
fingertips light on my hips. Dina swiveled
her buttocks in a fuchsia French-cut
that pointed like an arrow between her thighs.

We drifted along the shore, saying nothing
as the sand sucked our glittering toenails.
When we neared the lifeguard station, I took my cue
and giggled loudly; Dina tossed the heavy rope
of her braid and spread out our towels.
A dozen girls lay there, still as downed soldiers.
The lifeguard stared into the water.

A hundred yards out, the boys rode the clear
green waves. They yelped and spun their boards,
raking their hair from their tanned faces
as the ocean trembled on their bodies.

The guard never spoke to us, but we still
imagined ourselves smoldering in his mind.
Layers of sweat and oil thickened on our skin
like glaze. The sun sank closer, closer
to the water until we could no longer move.