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Stephen Kopel

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in her,
all those book stories
had ignited fires and
every cinder lay layered
like cerebral strata . . .
lit within,
his eldest daughter
avoided bright lights,
soft flicker of candle
and from a distance
resembled a heron at rest,
detached, observing its own kind,
not displeased . . .
her large hands
spoke to each other,
silencing her voice only
when the impetus to scream
became unbearable . . .
like moths
scouting dark terrain
for a luminous lure,
men circled her eyes
assessing contents,
departing singed . . .
and, only at his final visit,
before balcony's railing launched
eldest daughter into air,
did her father bring those books—
spineless, holding no terror—
in which she had so
thoroughly lived . . .