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## Mine! Mine! Mine!

Chelsea Rathburn

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*Chelsea Rathburn*

**MINE! MINE! MINE!**

—*Saint-Malo, France*

All week we'd heard them keening from the rooftops  
and the skies, their cries as sharp as infants' wails  
or brawling drunks, the herring gulls whose voices  
broke our sleep. A sign warned of "devil" birds,  
its cartoon gull stamped with skull and crossbones,  
and we'd watched two locked in battle, one wrestling  
the other to the ground, the pinned bird clamping  
his rival's beak, a struggle circular  
and futile. I knew the violence they could inflict,  
their ruthlessness, and still I was surprised  
when one sprang from the cathedral roof,  
a gargoyle come to life, and aimed itself  
at me, its sudden weight against my head  
and shoulders heavy as stone, if a stone could thrash.  
The sharp beak tore at the crêpe I held to my lips—  
we were that close—and though I ducked and screamed  
and the bird retreated to a shop awning,  
half of my lunch held in its bill, I spent  
all afternoon shrieking at shadows, convinced  
that something else was coming for me. I'd laugh  
about it later, how no one on the street  
looked twice at the squawking woman and silent bird,  
which tumbled from the sky like a hungry missile  
or angry angel, indignant appetite  
fueling the force and frenzy of its wings.