

crickets sing their alien music. Far above, a swift-moving streak of light. The girl understands the mechanics of falling stars, but still she feels a thrill at the suddenness of the light, and how quickly it fades. She forgets to make a wish.

When she goes inside, her grandmother, crying, turns off the television. When they think her asleep, the girl turns it back on. She hears about the rocket in orbit, the hole torn in its side. The suited men shaken from their silver cocoon, spilling into the void. She realizes the cause of that fast-moving flash, the awful fact of matter hitting atmosphere.

Ever since then it's haunted her: the man alone in his suit, coming to understand his fate. And the thrill she'd felt, seeing, not yet knowing.

At last the baby's eyes start to close. She relaxes, realizes that she, too, is falling asleep. Above them in the playroom the planets still rotate, silent in their orbits. She pictures a suited figure drifting among them, lost. He is the cause of her life's work, yet she has no way of saving him.

Still she stretches out a hand. Wishing, she reaches across history. The ghost of a touch—and the figure turns, weightless, and knows that she is watching.

Helene Wecker grew up in suburban Chicago, and received her Bachelor's in English from Carleton College in Minnesota. After college, she spent a number of years in the corporate and nonprofit worlds before returning to her first love, fiction writing. In 2007 she received her Master's in Fiction from Columbia University. After a dozen years spent bouncing between both coasts and the Midwest, she's finally putting down roots in the San Francisco Bay Area, where she lives with her husband and daughter. Helene's first novel, *The Golem and the Jinni*, was published in 2013 by HarperCollins.

RONNA SCHULKIN

Three Muses, 2013
oil on canvas, 36 x 40 in



courtesy: the artist