

A Body of Water Invites All Things

by Angela Kubinec

As I step down a grassy bank in a slow backwards tango toward a canal, I stumble a bit, laugh, and am not allowed to fall. The breeze is insistent, making twinkling quivers on the surface of the water, which has been fattened by recent rain. All around us are the gray and brown trunks of trees, slender and thickly standing together, their bark silently watching.

He leans me into the water, and as he holds me, I float on my back and talk to a hawk tracing circles between some clouds. My arms smooth the current and my hair comes to life, swimming away from my scalp. His hand rests firmly on my chest, and I feel smaller.

I will myself to sink, and holding my eyes open, I cross into a hushed space filled with inky gray and honey amber. The light forms a cool bright sphere above my face, and I feel a garment I am wearing begin to flutter.

I am held, suspended sweetly. His hand moves to my forehead, giving warm, reassuring pressure, like a child might feel as her father checks her for fever. We press me tenderly down.

The water becomes full of nothing but me, and I know that if it pleased him, I would try to live without air, or sound. My heart becomes thin and wide and flickers like silver. Tiny bubbles wiggle up from me like bits of hope, and I do not move. I feel him smile, and it makes me proud to affect him so easily, just by staying still, and waiting.

As I rest there, we watch a transformation. I lose all my edges, and turn into the shadow of a mysterious and beautiful siren,

capable of chasing light and lost souls, and of feeling the language between words. My resistance sublimates. There is a long instant of perfect relinquishment, in which I imagine droplets of water plinking into my lungs in a slow, musical fashion, like icicles melting in a perfect cave.

I cannot stay under without him, and he has let me up without warning. When I wipe my eyes and look around, I think he is gone. The air spans my face, and I need my hearing back, although I do not want it. When I finally spot him, he is in the grass, resting on his back, staring impassively at the sky.

