

Infinity Pool

by Claire King

Fingertip-nib entry touches turquoise, the split-second shock of the cold plunge. Neurons fire off nervous warnings. Abort. But it's too late for that and the length of me follows through. Noise is swallowed, eardrums thump, hot skin contracts.

I skim the bottom spitting bubbles, eyes wide and chlorine stung, until I hit the blue mosaic. I have nowhere to go but up. Up and out, lungs filled with parched air. Scalded.

He is waiting for my emergence, round empty tray on his upturned palm, greasy smile. Even the emptiness of the off-season pool lends no escape. Which is why we are here, after all. To escape. To forget. As if I would want to forget my father. Yet her hateful red toenails tell me she already has. The sun glints off her oiled-up shins and burns my eyes.

I spin away. They can have my back. If I were a dolphin there would be applause now. And fish.

Better. A seamless vista, out over the brackish divide between pool and ocean. Infinite. Profound. Words of relief swell and divide, incubating in my throat, waiting to be shared. I sink until water saturates my lashes, waiting, breathless, for the words to stop.

After ten minutes I feel nothing more, except the void where their eyes were once on my flesh. I expire, and am submerged, rolling under. The light is diffused, fractal through the hair floating around my face. The silence calms me. Everything is washed away.

Mackerel shimmer by. By the drop-off a gargantuan shadow coasts past, drinking the last of the light as I float into the abyss. The ink-black waters soak me up and I begin to write myself.

