

A Bend in the River

I am full of inconsistencies
the way a river is full of

leaves;

in the fall they pass by

or are pressed against rocks;
and in the winter they decay

feeding the nymphs that feed rainbows.

For an osprey you are strong enough to
take me. Gentle. Gentle. Gentle.

There are times I wake and stretch and the river floods and the light shows how quickly
banks are being washed away. I wake and stretch next to you and there is nothing better. I wake
and stretch and wake and stretch and lap against your heart and fall into the eddy of your heat.

I wish my eyes were light green.

I wish my forehead rested in your neck.

I wish you dared to drop to the river
from the cottonwood branch.

I would let you have the river.
I would let you take the trout in every bend and riffle.

A Steam Rising, Dew Falling, Little White Streaks of Clouds

Down near the hot springs where old men splash
like over-grown babies and women stretch silently
in the shade, in the pool fed by the creek,
the one you kept jumping into last night
when you would get too hot, the pool that would steal
your breath, the pool you would jump back out of
for the steam of a thousand needles, leaving today,
you notice a brook trout. And then another brook trout,
and then, lined up over the copper toned bottom
like broken sticks, another and another. One
under the shade of the bridge, suspended in sunlight,
white tipped fins, marbled back, looking at you, not caring.

And looking at brook trout with you, tight curly hair
spilling out over her scarf, nuzzled into her sweater-dress
onesie, is Madelyn, who you just spent the night with.
Madelyn who brings sun dried pesto and apple butter
and fudge and ginger kimchee and smoked Chinook
and sprouted cinnamon raisin bread wherever she goes.
Madelyn of the lemon basil goat cheese.
Madelyn of the pistachios and dried cherries.
Madelyn of the IPA. Madelyn of the Malbec.
Madelyn of the down comforter. Madelyn you could drown in.

Resting against the railing looking at the brook trout,
Madelyn touches you as if she were sunshine,
she touches you as if you were a friend who had sent
an elephant on her birthday, and her fingers were the only way
to acknowledge something from someplace so distant.
Her fingers like the trunks of a forest of aspen and sky
in-between the slats. Her fingers like flat sexy bellies.
Her fingers you want to grow pregnant with ideas,
muscles and ligaments stretching over a frame of bones.
Her fingers remind you that, among check-out, and dusty
gravel roads, and art supply stores with no one
to sell you art supplies, pleasure is a thing worth having.

And so you lean into Madelyn and lean over a bridge
and watch the brook trout that watch you, not caring,
and Madelyn who watches you, smiling, and her fingers
like fish, flip-flop on your skin, and your skin like an electrician
re-wires your brain, like backgammon or bridge
passed on from generation to generation:
*El que mantiene saltando en anoche. Madelyn de
edredón hacia abajo. Madelyn que podría ahogar.*
To adhere to a single word: Madelyn.

Stitching

Open my mouth with your thumb. Dare me
so I can see how to hold you. Wake me up.
Our words push away the earth and we spin
stars into a blanket and fall asleep at sunrise
pressed together into a thread. So I can see
how wide your eyes will open sometimes
it is just like drawing through and stitching.
I can tell you nothing out of the ordinary
about sewing but this quilt of stars is stuffed.

Suppose all we will ever know are these few
thin threads, linear and drawn out. How easy
to get lost. How easy to tumble like falling water,
to step backwards off docks. How easy to lie awake
and listen to passing storms, rain on the roof,
claps of thunder shaking the cabin walls. When
the refrigerator starts up I lean into your neck
and you echo the sentiment, turning just so
your lips catch my forehead and your soft breath
falls easily against my eyebrows while you pull us
together tighter and tie off a knot. The next morning

you point out your handiwork over breakfast.
It is true. I am smiling so hard I cannot get down
a spoonful of cereal as milk runs off my chin
and falls back into the bowl. It is the sound I make
after the quilt falls from our backs, having drawn
another stitch through this fabric of stars. The sound
after so much rain the lake erodes its banks. Of birch
about to fall over and oak roots exposed. Or pollen
after being knocked from pines which covers fledglings
carried too far away by the wind from their nests.

In Late August

In the days after everyone has left,
when the nights are just as starry
but I am no longer here to see them
I will think of you; sparrows flying
above the moving water of a river;

a final storm building in the afternoon sky;

maybe all day with the current piling against my legs, the invisible ways I can still

feel my fingers buried in your hair,
the sweet warmth and smell of your neck;

I will lumber and splash in the river, sending
the remaining trout scattering beneath rocks,
deep into pools, against undercut banks;

the edge of a singing boat, pulled
along by the wind and
even now I tell myself

months from now your absence will be replaced
by other absences, older absences;

clouds build in the afternoon sky,

I want a hard rain to fall to match the wind
so I can dart across the lake until I lift
over the trees; a good tack would take me
suddenly into your arms; maybe someday

we'll fall asleep again watching baseball highlights; it doesn't matter anymore if the Red
Sox win, but I will pretend it always will; sit next to you above the dugout while they play the
Twins; today

I drove northwest and you drove southeast;

in a few hours I will fish at dusk
catching pike off a sharp drop off;
tomorrow I will stain the deck
and chew ice in the sun; in a week
run around the lake; in a month

leave for the mountains, breath
the breath of fall, fly-fish in a snow storm;

in January, catch trout in zero degree weather; in February, let go of trying to catch a
twenty pound sea-run brown trout and instead stay for five weeks in a small town nestled against
the Andes;

it is the absence of the everyday
that is hardest to let go of;

you sitting on the last sections of dock,
your place in front of the window, forgetful
hitting my head on car frames or getting
lost on back roads; catching two fish at once
or leaving Duluth in an argument which were

both similar in the way I was so certain I was caught in states of grace, but really, just
moments I was gloriously confounded;

maybe that is what love is like anyway;
you can outrun yourself only for so long,
circling rings of bass and sunfish beneath
the neighbor's dock spreading outward,
caught between your leaving and having
worked my way through the low vibrating hum

of the mower; yellow butterflies, pairs of them, as I drive back from the cities;

months ahead staring at dark ceilings,
wondering about fish hidden somewhere
among the shoals and drop offs of summer;
watch the condensation of time grow around
a glass in the muggy evening; go swimming

with low clouds racing overhead;

maybe love is only transportation, stirring, rising to touch the space between
air and water;

a wind that carries waves;
that also carries us.