

I t goes easy somedays, small tidals within me stir about then settle like dust. I've learned to maneuver my mind this way, as it approaches the fragments of recollection, the weight of your door, I could never close it, cigarette in hand, slight smile, those eyes watching me — skip this slide. Yes, skip this slide to the time I ate blue toast in kindergarten and that little girl stepped on my hand, or the time in Paris when I winked at that Frenchman, or really anytime other than those times. Than that house. Than that — it goes easy somedays, but not this day when we hit bad rapids and I get too far in the back of the boat, too lost in the centers of my own pangs, tumbling down into an intangible flashback with sunken rocks, and a drastic fall into love's lap on that day, in that cafe, when I first met those eyes, that left the room, and then returned to me. At the bottom of the falls, I stand drenched. Sopping. The collected supplies left floating along the outer edges of the river. What can you do, but get back into the vehicle. Pulling over on the side of I-91 to scream into the bushes with Joni Mitchell and Patsy in the backseat can't always be a catharsis. What can you do, but get back. Somedays I think that's the end. That's the end of this day. This love. I'll fall asleep. I'll dream of zeroes. I'll wake to whiskey, as it seems that's the only ration these days, and I'll start new. And somedays, that is the end. I fall over into a drowning pool, capsized, demolished, and I'm left washed up on the banks. There is no such thing as endings or beginnings, that's what I neglect. What ruins me each time. Later in this evening, it was the worst place we had seen yet. A narrow path. Gaping mouth. Full of points. Rushing. Threatening to smash everything to pieces. A giant fist plucks me from the fire I've made for myself. Thrusts me into a coffin-sized entrapment. Locks me inside with false keys. I sink to the bottom of the body in darkness. I'm left with only the pictures I've painted. The car in the sunset. Towel draped around waist. It falls. Smell of cinnamon. Hearty laughs. In bed. Against my back. Or was it his. Or was I on top. Or was I in the kitchen. Or did I hear him hum. Or did he sing to me. Or did I cry out. Or was I too loud. Or too soft. Or did the fire he build burn him. Or did I. Or at all. Or did red not become me. Or did it too much so. Or was it the scars. Or was it the sun. Or was he it. Or was I blinding. Or blinded. Or the painting on the left wall. Or the dog or the borders. Or the man on the right. Or was he the painting. Or was the painting real. Or was it a painting at all. I fall asleep with the feeling of a body next to mine familiar, one that holds me tight during this nightmare, one that brushes my skin faintly with the reminder of love. When I wake, I expect to turn over and see a spine stretched. A face scrunched with sleep. A single kiss. Open arms. A chest to lay my head on. I only wake to realize I came out on the wrong side of the river.