

“For Want of Water”

an ant will drown himself, his body submerging  
into ease, his mandibles, head, antennae, baptized. How lovely  
to lose your senses to the cup of your want. A boy  
drags his mother’s body across the desert, her fluids rising  
to heaven in order to quench her skin. How divine  
her body must have looked, clutched at the ankles, her  
arms reaching out in exultation, her head stippled in rings  
of sand and blood as he walked with her, slowly, her fallen  
and moving shape the fork of a divining rod, her body shaking  
with each of his steps, and for water, shaking to find  
that deep and secret tributary. I have dreams of letting go  
of water, of waking my lover to a bed of my urine  
as my brother did to me, his thin limbs shaking to discover  
the shame of his inside self. And what did we know that to have  
an inside wet enough to free was luxury? The boy  
walks with his mother—he is only thirteen—the age I learned  
to stroke on the toilet the blood off my fingers, and he can-  
not cry, because to cry would mean the waste of his own  
wetness, to cry would mean to stop, to think, to differentiate  
the liquids moving down his face, to cry would mean  
to cry, so he goes on, and—this is a common story, the boy  
is not a boy now but every boy we have ever known—people  
find him, they help him to lift his mother onto their hands,  
their necks, they lift her to their own dark and desperate  
dryness, and they make it, yes, when they make it over the border  
to a mall parking lot, they lay her down, they fall with her  
body as a clump of bodies behind a city  
dumpster, and people make calls from behind windows, not  
to the immigrants with the dying core, but to the police, who come  
with their handcuffs and call her *dead*. No. To call  
would be to give her life a name. Roundness to where there are  
now only angles. To call would be to remember all  
the other times that he has called for her, and the boy plugs his  
ears, shakes his head, doesn’t know that he cannot physically  
produce tears anymore—such thirst can rid us of these symbols—  
only that now there are mouths around him calling other names  
as men run and other men give chase, because how much do you need  
to give up in order to stay? a boy? a mother? your land and inner  
land? Nothing. Nothing can be given, and he will remember  
nothing as he sits in a cell waiting for his sister to come to release  
him from his cellular pain. He will only remember water, that want  
for the clouds to let go their rain, and how seeing  
them dropping, he kept pulling forward, their bodies steady towards that  
dark, uneven line.

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