

Fluvial Triptych
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I.

I suppose I should thank you for introducing us.

Do you remember that day in early Autumn?
Just a short walk
through the Forest
off the state highway of your youth:
there He lay.

So beautiful, it was as if
even the Trees
leaned over Him to get a better look.

You knew a spot where
we could drop our things, where
He ran deep enough
to hold us whole.

So I followed you and,
as is my nature, I
slowly
made my way in.

What a relief to have Him hold me.
What a relief to have His murky water
hide this Body
that never really felt like mine
from the prying sliver of Sky.

And what relief that
He did not ask me to move faster.
He did not ask me to go farther.

II.

I kept seeing Him long after you
 were gone from my days
 but your handprints still
 etched on my bones.

Summer: I eat a blood orange on His shoulder
 where the Pine needles and Sycamore roots
 frame a perfect seat for me;
 I never forget to toss Him a slice.

When the sun has dried the juice on me
 I unfold lazily
 a Heron with nowhere to be
 and wade in

 watch how He waits
 for each blind foot to find
 soft silt amongst the slick hidden rocks
 I test my weight every time
 just to make sure
 before taking my next step, giggling
 while He patiently laps at
 the orange clay on His shore.

He touches me so softly to wash the blood from my chin and my elbow.

Winter: when I visit Him
 the raindrops
 paint playful circles
 along His wide strong back.

I lean against a rough trunk
 catch my breath
 pull my coat tighter against me
 say Sorry Lover
 not today.

And He utters not one sound of complaint.

III.

When you see Him again
 I hope He gathers
 every Sweetgum fruit, every Loblolly cone
 every Asian clam (upright, agape)
 and every errant shard of glass
 under the unsuspecting arch of your foot.

When you cry out and fall into Him
 on hands and knees
 I hope He calls on the Grapevine
 and the rusted cords of mills long-gone
 to bind your wrists and ankles.

I hope He makes you gasp for air
 just above His glossy face
 I hope He says clearly with the roar of His white rapids:

I know what you did.

I hope His words echo through the Land so even
 your Mother
 your friends
 and every person who came after me
 can hear Him too.

I hope before He lets you go that
 He spits your name out of His mouth
 like the curse that it is.

But My Lover.
 My Lover.
 He will do none of these things.

He will welcome you in with the same soft touch
 that I have sought
 like a balm
 all these years.

May He teach you a lesson.