

Bryanna Licciardi

River Bed

In my dream, I am floating down this river,
tasting for salt, the mist,
searching for an ocean, but it never comes.
The currents stay steady and slow,
the light is dull and I cannot see
where to get off.

Last year my dog gets off
his leash, and drowns in the river
at the bottom of the hill. I see
my dad disappear in the mist
and I watch him walk back slow,
empty-handed and tells me to come

here. Then my mom comes
around the corner, wiping her hands off
with a kitchen towel. She slows
down when she sees his face. *The river...*
he said. All three of us stared into the mist
and we must have seen

something. We must have seen
something we didn't like. When my dog doesn't come
home, I don't ask anything. I missed him,
but didn't see a word. Then I dream myself gone, off
this street, down the current of this river
and I'm looking down, watching it slowly.

Today I am learning how to swim, but I'm slow,
slower than the other kids. I see
them being stronger and better, I see that river
and it makes me wonder how come
Some things die and some things are better off.
Suddenly I am screaming. Mister

Hendricks, my swim coach, is yanking me out of the mist
and he holds me until my breath slows
down and I am calm again. He pushes off
the damp hair stuck to my head. I see
his deep concern. When my mom comes
to get me, I'm too embarrassed to talk about the river.

I am off in the mist.
And I heard the river, its slow,
Slow grinding (I can see it) against the bones, and then it comes.

Father's Garden

I determine that God is addiction,
an immense façade. Sunday choir cries out

his name like a drug, and it all makes sense.
When Mom fences together a garden,

I try to get into it. The flowers
bloom, powerful, at ease, I pray for them.

We find rabbits in our backyard, and
go to The Garden Center for dried blood.

Sprinkling the powder around our plants,
I ask if it is real blood in our bag.

He shakes his head, but not to me I think.
Death is redundant, don't you see? he says.

Later we would learn how to plant gardens
on his shoulders, forbidden to hurt for.

When I am growing old, I plan to walk
with a cane, raking into deep, dark soil.

Happy Endings

I am a 22 year old virgin sex
addict. I think about not having it, and not—
having it,
and doing it, and splitting it. I need
to not have it, lusting after
fear. Piecing apart the fuck from I
love, intercourse, lust,
My id from your ego. Sexy, primitive
history. It's the beginning and
The best way to end things.

My sex
has a spine.
So says my first girlfriend.
It's empty, provoking.
Picture
a countryside brothel, rocking,
Her mouth wet in the young man's ear,
What are we afraid of?