

Therese Murphy

Streams

It is so easy to get caught up in all that life incessantly demands of us. So much of what makes us feel worthwhile or successful comes from the outside. It seems like there can never be enough. We collect complements and trophies and money because it seems indistinguishable from our existence. But imagine a stream running through the forest. It is beautiful and perfect and endless without agenda. If I stood by its side and yelled so loudly that my voice scared the birds from the trees, the stream would not stop or change. It would still dance. I could yell at the stream and tell it that it was worth nothing, and it would still dance. I could point at it and say that it's a shame that it wasn't better, but it would still dance. "Why are you not a river or an ocean? Why are you not louder or softer?" It would still dance. It just is, endlessly. Maybe I can still dance too.

Pearls

I don't want to live life with a built-in valve - a one-way exchange between myself and the world, often letting everything flood in and allowing nothing to escape. You can only do that for so long until you swell and leak and eventually burst without order or regulation. You can't sort that kind of mess logically for the world to understand you and all of your little pieces. They are left to be picked through by lovers and strangers and friends, but those people can't see how they should fit together. Even worse, they might leave behind your favorite ones in the wreckage. You see your shining gold and magnets and pearls where they saw nothing worth saving. That is perhaps the worst part. I don't want to have to tell anyone that a pearl is a pearl.

Mirrors

Three feet back from the mirror. I don't like what I see. I pull out my endless scroll to recite the sacred litany of flaws, but today something stops me. I walk so close to myself that my breath fogs the mirror. I look straight into my eyes. Here I do not see any ugliness or hatred, no sense of being underwhelming or below standards. I see the joy of first riding a bike, and the exhaustion of swimming for six hours on a hot summer day. I see playing dress up as a child and running through a forest and cutting my own hair. I see freedom and love and laughter and joy. Myself, unfiltered. People say that perspective comes with distance. But when the fight is between you and your mirror, move closer.