

# The River, a Ghost

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Bones break water—vertebrae tracing sky  
no longer a womb but a large eddy that never dries,

its depth and darkness a kindness on summer days,  
the river giving birth in its slow dissolve into a ghost.

Each day hotter than the last disappears another droplet  
until, slowly, our eyes adjust and we notice its descent.

Soon it's all we can tell of the river, what it used to be, what it used to cover.  
We are left with narrow straps of water flesh, taut ligaments too thin to hide fish,

thin enough that a heron only needs to swoop close to break surface,  
a puncture of proximity that we wish we could fully feel,

for if we could we would bleed out from so many beak stabs,  
glorious in their precision and sharpness, so sure of themselves.

In that river's absence we are given a new topography,  
a new horizon to follow as light reaches and recedes.

This is what we follow. And this is how I want to end this drought  
recitation, but this is bullshit, metaphor only goes so far.

I am sorry for turning another river into another metaphor,  
for hiding grief when I know full-well that to hide is to bury,

for trying to compare a river in drought

to a couple unable to have children.

It is never memory, just a haunting in the periphery  
a shadow we can never quite trace back to its solid form.

Can something never alive become a ghost?

We once believed in subterranean streams seeping,  
reclaiming rivers, a conjuring of hope into life.

In the slow fade, rock is all we touch.  
We are left with river bones.

And this is also bullshit. Here.

We are left with desire for rain.  
We are left with sunlight and moonlight and nights so dark  
    all we are is thigh against thigh  
    all we hear is the slow murmur of water kissing rock  
    all we trace is the intertwining of our ligaments,  
        liturgies of love, a topography  
so thin so taut we can't help but break  
our ghosts into pieces with our thirst.

