

Senior Division, Nonfiction

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The Third Line of My Haiku (an excerpt)

Sadie always gets in water. When young, if I took her to the beach in April or July, December, or March she would go into the water despite any protests of mine about the cold or lack of a change of clothes. It was more than a draw, it was a need, as if a requirement to coat herself in liquid, feel it in her pores. If it was watery, creamy, slick, slimy, scaly, squishy, earthy, velvety, whipped, or buttery her hands and face needed to be in it. It was more than tactility. She was all-in physical, embracing the touchable with fervor. Wanting to *be it*.

Running into and out of, past banks of bushy, sticky alders, river edges bleeding into shrubs of sorrel and rowan that are green and alert, tremulous and rustled by small currents that eddy and swirl. The beginning of the path is a clear pool, back and up on the hill where our heart lives. It runs clear, then murky, then clear again—wide then narrowing, then burgeoning again until it passes close to town, below the line of blue sky with its sheet of whipped clouds, through the



darkened line of housetops and powerlines, laundry lines, until it greedily surges through deep mounds of heavy grey stone and finds her, a little one ingesting the world. She's listening to the river stories pass her ears in bubbles. She's learning about the way out and the way in.

Sadie used to share cells with me, tethered to me in the depths and floating quiet, but one has to be born, and then the cord needs to be cut. It was her father who cut it. Once she was outside, she was a wholly beautiful thing, but now apart, coming up against the boundaries of our bodies, skin to skin. She was set loose—a single shoe dropped from the boat, a swimmer plunged into black ocean, an astronaut untethered in space. How far can she go?