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Swimming Lessons

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Swimming Lessons

I was thinking of the ways that we leave each other. Today I thought of mornings, your back turned against me in sleep, a shoulder arched above white sheets, skin I felt I was still part of. Nothing new here, of course, except how light is always so hesitant at six in the morning; it stumbles into rooms; something like the way we stumble out of sleep, as if we were apologizing for our entrances. But you were sure-footed in your sleep and never apologized. I imagined you were dreaming, a slow dream about the roads outside of Jacksonville, where the smell of paper mills and Florida swampland drifts in and out of Gulf stations and Publix supermarkets. Were you dreaming that morning of hot pavement, chewing gum, shopping carts? It's hard to tell sometimes. Last night I dreamt of the cruel silences we impose on each other as we consider our separate exits, of the woods outside of Hastings, where the rain was somehow the muffled sound of a piano heard through thin walls. I dream like this sometimes. It's hard to understand. Years ago my grandfather taught me that the art of water was not learning how to swim, but instead learning the best ways not to drown. Sometimes when I hold you I imagine that we are treading water together, that somehow the motion of our bodies could bear us upwards. Forgive me this, Kattrin. I am always imagining things.

Richard Latimer