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Fishing in the Truckee · *Jane Staw*

My mind is never where my body is.
It has always been this way.
I might admire dusk settling
like a gray bird onto the Pacific
and suddenly I miss cornfields
in Iowa, the way the evening light
disguises itself in purples and browns.
Or startled by a sudden rain
disturbing the leaves,
I imagine the opposite:
the silence of a scarecrow in a meadow
slowly filling with snow.
It's as if I am always
outside of what I see,
and so on the verge of disappearing—
like a river running away from itself,
while all around me
things seem to be holding their own:
the rains repeat themselves each spring,
the trees dig in a little deeper
every year. I consider this
a failing on my part,
an unnecessary fragility,
like buds fooled by an early thaw
into blooming,
their edges quickly turning brown,
so that sometimes I would like
to shed my body,
get rid of skeleton, flesh, scars,
become pure mind,
no longer an intruder
in the scenes I travel through:
the empty barnyard in March,
its patches of stale hay,
the skin of ice over the pond.
Or the block of houses
with their clipped lawns,
their scornful roses.

Without body I would no longer brush
against the hedges as I walk
making them rustle
when they would rather stand quietly
and observe. I would no longer
force the house sparrows to disperse.
Other times I'd like to shed my mind,
become just a body
propped against a tree
casting reel after reel into a river
for trout, the flies buzzing,
the grass stiff, green.
And I would not try to imagine
the smell of woods after rain.
I would not call back
the Japanese fisherman, bare heels dug
into damp sand for hours,
who left the beach at dusk,
his pail emptied even of the smelt
he'd bought for bait.
Would not listen for the wind
kicking up piles of discarded leaves.
No. I would simply lean against
that tree, as if I were the river bank,
or a log, part of a landscape
not conscious of what it is
that makes it a landscape,
as unaware as the sun of its motion
while it eases across the sky,
or as ignorant as the river of its water
slipping through its hands
carrying everything that is the river's
with it: debris, leaves, sand.