7 Lines of Buoyancy

She drifts past the buoy,
as if a decapitated head has floated out to sea;
white caps pass it back and forth like a beach ball;
the ocean swallows the freckles on her face –
treading water loses its ease as love’s endless ocean
drowns those who swim
with naïveté; the river of ignorance leads to the jaws of the deep.

High Tide at Dawn

Night’s anesthetic dissolves in your blue-tube veins.
Egyptian cotton seeps out from under his crumpled body.
She harvests the previous evening’s garments
from the booze-flooded floor.

Indecision pulses through the tips of her fingers
as they hover and linger over a folded leather pocket
that determines just how far the ferry will float away from here.

Alcohol deluded water ascends with cold fingers up her waist.
She wades on the edge of his specious bed,
blinded by the sun as it pours between the gaps
of soundless, gawking curtains;
a waterfall of gold rays choke her inflamed airways;
fabric bodies unresting in the dawn’s dull breeze.
Nights of intricate escape plans
unveiled by the sun’s silent reprimand.

She swims to the door, it disappears under the 80 proof waves –
his dream-induced whisper water in her lungs;
“The sea can’t hurt us if we’re safely on the shore.”

Earth’s Nectar

The wisp of a hummingbird’s wings
leaving the tangerine blossom
of the trumpet vine slinking through a rotted trellis;
sipping and slurping the succulent nectar –
a sucrose mist left like the burst of a soapy bubble.
    Our tongues collect sweet drops slipping from leaves above us;
    we swim in the brook that replenishes thirsty, dependent seeds.
A toothpick driving too deep;
digging a grave in wet, pink soil,
a scarlet stream floods and stains
    a path of ivory bricks;
a russet creek creeps and crawls
out the corner of the river’s mouth.
    Overripe berries float atop crystalline waves;
    the dust of our skin sinks, a filthy mire in our wake.

Morning Shower

It’s 7:27 AM and she stands on the boardwalk –
    knees buckled, her hands recoil from the salt in the wind –
contemplating how far along she would have been.
It’s 7:37 AM and the sandy earth resets beneath her
    as the waves wipe away mistakes made in the dark;
her mind wallows in the muck of her thoughts.
It’s 7:46 AM and the rain’s scent crawls across her skin.
    She wonders when the clouds will release their children
of condensation on their short lived journey, only one day
    to return as their fate guides them to evaporate.
It’s 8:03 AM and drops of cold, acidic water collect in the eddy’s
    that form around her; the downpour a waterboard torture
as she inhales the vapors that poison her dreams.
It’s 8:16 AM and a yellow shovel is buried neck deep; a blue bucket with a sand-expanded canyon in its shell leaks ocean water into her surf-induced laceration stretching underneath her splayed fingers – tracing empty, open hearts across a vacant womb – cleaving and clawing out caves in her sternum.

It’s 8:25 AM and pellets of opaque sunrise showers sink into her opened pores, leaving reservoirs in her fleshy extensions. The horizon cries with orange tears of mitigation as the night drifts behind windblown trees; darkness has retreated.

It’s 8:36 AM and he finds the golden-charm bracelet he gave her on their 4th anniversary at sunset in Newport being pulled beneath the surface of thick sea foam. A child that could be his own walks out into the ocean.

**The Sea’s Fingers**

*Waves of disarray lead boats of hope astray;*

*the chilled wind whispers warnings*

*to unsuspecting lovers caught in the grip of the tempest.*

Your seaweed phalanges sway in a current of dark blue ink; waterlogged and wrinkled fingerprints point every which way. They tangle and torment spinning propellers welded onto the back and bottoms of rusted freighters. Twisting tendrils braid their fingers around decaying bodies of sunken ships; caress the lips and dip their tips into the cavernous ditches that etch across your smooth, sandy skin. The ebb and flow of your marshy breaths catch and confuse all who explore your depths while wrapping and winding slimy emerald tentacles around the ankles of oblivious intruders. Unable to keep your deathly hunger at bay; a bed of kelp doubles as a watery grave.
The River

Why not go back to the river
behind the Dirty South
where we would lie on the sloped banks,
smoking blunts, talking about all the crazy things we promised we’d do
together –
like take a train to Chicago, spend a day in the Windy City,
or live an Amish lifestyle for maybe a year, tell electricity to suck it.
Remember when we said we’d find a plot of land on the side of a mountain
in the hills of Italy, live off the earth and curse our ancestors before us?

Please, remember.

Why not go back to the river,
that flowed through our laced fingers,
where we washed each other clean after we walked back from Six Fest?
Mud crusted to your eyebrows left sooty trails of black
as it crossed the bridge of your nose, fell off the top and
dissipated.
You were growing your brown hair out, and I thought I would hate it,
but it hung over your hazel eyes; sleek, stringy, sultry and soft.
Remember how my fingers taught yours to braid?
Dark curls tangled in a love nest on my scalp from the nights you showed me
what love really was.

Forget about the river,
that’s polluted with rusted metal cylinders of Pabst and Budlight,
where we took the pound of dry ice you bought,
dropping it with uncertainty into plastic bottles half-emptied of water,
twisting the caps and casting them behind our backs, for better or worse.
We’d duck at the explosion as filthy Athens’ water sprinkled
our thoughts.

You pushed me in the murky liquid and I bellyflopped,
needles pricked my exposed skin; I exhaled bubbles, my cheeks deflate
at the sight of your distorted face floating above me.
Upside down cross, my limbs extend in an “x”; I sank like an anchor –
the mucky bottom sucked me in, quicksand beneath an oceanic swamp.

A Willow Weeps

Mushy brown creek bed
extracts my toe jam;
a newborn suckling a mother’s
swollen breast for blood-warmed milk.

You cried that night.

The force of your hands
on the small of my back;
pushed into dirty fish-rot water,
my knees buckle and bow
like the legs of a flamingo.
Overzealously played hamstrings
pluck out chords of pain.
Craggy rocks
chisel illegible initials into
my crusted, calloused palms

under dancing branches.

A gracefully swift turn; a ballerina’s fouetté;
spinning full circle, my clenched
bloodied fist hits you square in the face;
your jaw absorbs the shock

of my grandmother’s weeping willow tree.

Thick, fluid words
push past my uvula;
escape my parched throat
a raspy whisper
“what is that thing?”

We tried to erase the day’s memory.

You drop the rock
you’d planned to lodge
into a dead carp’s skeleton;
your expression a reflection
of a boy’s terrified surprise.
I choke out a laugh;
a wet, gurgled cry.
Soggy bone that distorted
the water’s surface
was not the decayed body
of a river’s finned-baby -
it was the dismembered
torso attached to crack skull;
fish nibbled skin of an infant.

As we brought that child to life
our naked bodies melted, intertwined.