

The water roared around my ears, flowed across my face. My eyes were shut, mouth open, smiling. I was somewhere else. just for once, i wasn't thinking about the future; what would happen the next day, the next week, the next year. All I was thinking about was the next moment, the one i knew was coming, the one i stretched my arm upward to meet, the one in which i knew there would be light and air and warmth and clear, empty sky stretching above me into the distance, into forever. i was coming, coming, wait for me, world, my lungs swelling , mind reaching, reaching, toward the surface. it felt like an inverse kind of falling, tumbling, bodily pulled, propelled, dragged upwards to where i could see the light playing, bouncing ,flashing teasingly on the surface.

A few feet more. Three. One. My fingers were inches away from breaking the bright, fluid barrier. I was holding my breath. Those last few inches seemed to take my whole lifetime to move through. Excited, i wondered if it was like being in the desert, when you can get so dehydrated you start to hallucinate about water.

Was I in the desert? No. I was under water. In that case, did people who had too much water ever have mirages of the water ending? But surely that was all backwards, or upside down; i didnt know which and it didnt seem to be important. The thought made me giggle - the bubbles went shooting up toward the surface at piteous, enviable speed. As if to illustrate the point, i felt my body flip easily into a backward somersault as i continued to shoot upward, soaring toward the air. The blood rushed to my head. I spluttered. My lungs were bursting, my heart racing, but i didnt care. I was loving every second of freedom as i grew dizzier from the lack of oxygen. I could do anything - I could float or fly or scream or fall and it didn't matter. Nothing would ever matter again.

I sat up with a jolt, sweating. I looked over at the dark - haired figure sleeping peacefully beside me, absently reaching out to smooth the tuft of his hair that always stuck out, just above the ear. Then I lay down and just looked at him ,as I did every time i woke from that dream, every morning trying to love him just a little less than before. He was so still, so quiet. I wanted to hold him, breathe him in, keep him, exactly as he was now, perfect. I wasn't asking for a miracle, a thunderbolt, an overnight cure. I just wanted the feelings to ebb away, gradually, gently, day by day, so it was almost unnoticeable. For some time now, I'd been thinking that might make it easier. For me. Perhaps even for both of us. I felt moisture on my cheek, reached up, and wondered how long I'd been crying. Probably since before I woke. It seemed to effect me that way now. It explained the dream, the same dream every morning, always just before i woke. I wondered if i'd ever break the surface. Maybe, after he'd gone.

Angry at my last thought, I climbed out of bed hurriedly, pulling on yesterday's socks with vicious force. I dragged a discarded t-shirt across my cheeks - don't be crying when he wakes up, loser, I told myself; do you think that's the first thing he wants to see? I stalked across to the mirror.

The room was a mess - i had to kick the last week's dirty clothes across the room to make a path for myself. His things, folded neatly on the chair, drew the morning's first smile. Even in his grave, i thought, examining my blotchy face in the mirror before scrubbing and rinsing it vigorously. I'd best clean up before he wakes and wants to do it himself. Daring my reflection to argue with a final glare, I slipped out of the room, pulling the door to behind me, still sure to leave it open just a little.

As long as we were both still breathing, I needed it to be the same air.