

*Cochiti Lake, 1989*

Plank-patterned. Nail-headed.  
The waves were silvery. There was a wind.  
It was my idea to go there.

It was my idea.

We were liquid. Which is to say,  
we were not quite gelled.

It was at Cochiti. Where the Rio Grande pools for a while (before)  
spilling recklessly  
over the dam.

Night came. We lay down in our separate sleeping bags.  
*Why is this important to you?*  
We lay down.  
We saw a star falling. In slow motion, in an arch, a small white dot descending.  
Visible only in the moment it fell.

(A flare.)

You told me your wish.

(A risk.)

I remember the fishermen checking their traps. Oaring out to the center of the lake, entering the realm of its iris. Their silhouettes. The metal clanging. The dock roughing us up. The dock knocked about by the waves, the waves by the wind. The smear of thin-ish clouds filtering moon. The feel of your hand resting (lightly) on the small of my back.

In the morning, I stripped down to swim. (Water is my medium.)  
I did flip turns (w/out a wall) and back bends. I invited you in.  
That's when it began. When I invited you

We didn't know the word "aquifer."  
We didn't know the phrase "perched water zone."  
We didn't know the meaning of "ephemeral stream,"

its relation to precipitation  
or the melting of snow.  
We didn't know about "impairment," (the available options). The list:  
where we could no longer swim; where and what we could no longer drink.  
We didn't know about "fluctuating temperature" or "vectors for pathogens."  
We didn't know about "turbidity," about "incident light" and what it might mean to be  
"scattered or absorbed" in sediments. What it might mean

to become  
a "*suspended* solid," to be "alluvial"  
to be "eroded, transported, and deposited"  
by a stream  
onto a solid rock shelf.

I thought "primary contact" was what happened  
between *us*  
that night.  
(the feel of your hands) (the small of my back).

We didn't know about tritium, strontium -90, or plutonium -238.  
We didn't know about unlined pits, trenches, and shafts.

The map of the Parajito Plateau, with its canyons and springs and flats – had I seen it – I  
would have told you it looked like a lung, at home in the cage of its ribs.

We didn't know the lit lives of explosives, RDX & HMX.

We didn't know about VOLITAL and SEMI-volatile compounds. (well, maybe we knew  
a little something of that...)

-- as we knew a little something  
of concentrated metals:

Copper: shiny pan. shade of your skin.

Zinc: raspberry flavored tablet I suck to stop a sore throat.

Lead: dark vein of a pencil. (the tip of it jutting out of my bag & into my thigh  
when the bus lurched. dark star fixed beneath skin.)

Mercury: quick-silver god. slippery signifier. hot/cold. sick/well.

Well. S

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k.

Cadmium: yellow paint.

Arsenic: springs we soaked in  
winter nights, *Ojo Caliente*.

We didn't know about americium, cesium, perchlorate, or PCBs.

We didn't know about hexavalent chromium.

We didn't know about selenium (its soluble & insoluble states) or selenosis.

I, too, was once "highly mobile in water."

Consider, now, the lyric possibilities of being  
"re-suspended  
in high winds."

– *Denver Quarterly*

