No Matter How

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By Greg Emilio

Longing, we say, because desire is full
of endless distances.

—Robert Haas, “Meditation at Lagunitas”

It smells sulfuric
as our bodies steam
like kettles in the starless
winter sky. The mineral
spring bellows beside us
its geothermal murmur;
ancient salts pirouette
opaque ballerinas.

Not even a moon
peers out from beyond
the clouds, no silver
to pierce the sycamore
boughs stretched over
our lengths of skin,
lengthened under
the staggered leaves.

Without words
we say never before
never this before
never, no, not ever...
My elbow rubs
a raw pestle into
the plank along
the pool and turns sore,
so the downward angle
diminishes: we
bridge a few inches.

And I’m void
of verse or rhyme,
holding a poetry tasting
cardboard under my tongue;
unable to articulate the punctuated
glint of her iris.

Wind sings between
the branches overhead.
Guttural noises
rise from the turbid brine,
coalesce between our likenesses
and fill as one a pair of hollow shells.

But that empty
still echoes, continues
its un-cadenced rhythm
across the distance that desire
fills with longing, no matter
the touch, or how gathered of laughter,
wor(l)dr(oo)ked among the communion
of a lip-pressed, sky-darkened union.

Will it ever be enough?
we ask aloud.

The wind purls,
and we sense once again
our distinct, steaming skins.

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