

Lake Swimming

Carol Tyx

The surface looks solid,
like tinted glass, only you can
slice your hand through it
and not get cut.

She can't see her feet
even though she is walking
on them, sinking in
mud so soft it could be
cake batter. She both likes and
doesn't like how it squeezes through
her toes as she feels her way
into the water.

Past the rope, she keeps losing
parts of herself,
her calves, her thighs, her hands,
her shoulders, the blue stripes
on the swimsuit her mother
sewed for her.

Unlike the community pool,
where she can hunt for
pennies with her eyes open,
the lake closes around
her; if she opens her eyes,
it's what she imagines
a dust storm to be,
a thick, dark brown.

Smells brown, too,
like damp dirt

mixed with fish guts;
earthy, elemental,
reptilian, how it was before
God created dry land,
a dark taste, like a secret
room closed up for centuries.
Halfway across, she pulls herself
onto a rock, closes her eyes,
feels her skin evaporate.
When she slithers off, disappearing
into the lake, she leaves
a dark imprint.

Carol Tyx teaches writing and American literature at Mt. Mercy University in Cedar Rapids, IA. Her work has recently appeared in *Hunger Mountain*, *Big Muddy*, and Iowa City's *Poetry in Public*. On any given day you might find her cooking with kale, contra dancing, or standing on her head.