

## After Playing too Hard at Love

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*J. L. Meadows*

I've come to be with this water  
I've come to this river to see something  
Something between the water and me  
Confused by the spot next to me, near,  
Empty.  
I remove my shirt, the sun heats my back  
For the first time this year.  
I see a shadow that is not there,  
Next to my own in the surface of the water,  
Moving.  
The water calls me; I want to go in, alone,  
As I should have many years ago.  
The child wants to go to the bottom  
And break the surface splashing to shore,  
Gasping.  
I'm no longer sure I would want to return  
To the clear outside, up from the suspension  
Of eyes moving through water  
Gold under the afternoon sun,  
Burning.  
I'm saying things that would not matter  
If a shoulder were touching my own.  
I wouldn't care whose  
As long as it wanted to be there,  
Touching.  
The window without water is covered in dust;  
The light it lets in is never enough.  
I see a terrapin surface three times in the same spot  
Before I notice it is a stick rocking under the surface,

Breaking.

I look up to the sound of wings across the water—  
Turkey hen and gobbler fly to the other shore.  
He lands ahead of her in a pasture hinting green;  
And turning, addresses her in the dance of hope,  
Loving.

Yet I remain firm, and the river down there,  
The solitary shadow growing longer in the surface.  
The water I heard calling is downstream now;  
And the spot next to me, nearer,  
Empty.