

Elaine Johanson

Thirst

The river swells, browns,
heaves like sick.

Even under a sky drained
to blue, waves eat

the soft cliffs.
A year later,

broken boats fleck the beach
like shrapnel

so we pair our bikinis
with old sneakers

to jump from a pier
sweet with new pine.

We are young and full.
We eat and drink

like animals, and see ourselves
in nothing.

Our arms are fresh
in the water; still,

it takes four of us
to shuck a twist



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of hull out of the sand
and heave it

onto the orange cliff,
which holds it

and then crumbles.
We run to the hull

like it's a dog
we're saving

and lift it up again,
hailing dirt onto our legs.

We see ourselves
in nothing,

not our footprints filling
with water, as thirsty

as any mouth, nor
this heavy wing

we carry in our bare,
salty hands.

Our arms breathe together
to toss this shared weight

and our heels dig, hurrying
a sliding clay.

