

# Into Grains of Sand

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I.

Your dog sleeps on the back seat,  
a blanket spread below his dream-twitches  
like the blue night spreads across  
the open road. I can't imagine you  
beside me, a passenger for once.  
You are lucky you left early,  
slipping out from between my arms  
before morning had finished  
frosting over. You always had to be the first,  
always had to leave me behind. Or am I only  
imagining your back more familiar  
than your face. I could trace blind  
the lines of your shoulder blades,  
the scooped grooves that deepened  
with each day, each pill. How did you manage  
to lift me, hold me  
up to the light, examine  
my skin for the cracks and fissures  
that mapped your own?  
Did you imagine me a glass bowl, your face  
refracted by the smoothness of mine?

Now your car's plush seat  
adjusts to my contours, mirrors moved  
away from my face. Water beads the glass like  
the goose bumps on my arm,  
and I wish I believed  
you were driving with us, not just  
this box of blackened bones,  
but your voice, your hand on my collar,  
a touch that will always haunt me. And as chilled air

from the open window fills the car, reaches  
like an arm around my neck,

I almost do.

II.

The day we drove out to French Beach  
you told me you'd miss me.

We walked along the line of the water  
felt sand shift beneath our feet, water spill  
over our toes. You plucked smooth pebbles,  
ran your thumb over marbled colours—

*How long before a rock is worn  
into a grain of sand? Fifty years?*

*One hundred? One thousand?*

For you, thirty-nine.

We climbed over logs piled on the beach  
like bodies in a mass grave,  
past picnic tables painted in bird shit,  
to a grove of twelve Douglas firs, trunks black  
from the salt damp, low branches  
ragged amputees. Your dog mapped scents  
in the sun-starved needles. We circled trees  
shaped like conjoined twins, torsos in a race  
to reach the sky. Under the thickest, tallest  
tree we stood, looked up through broken boughs,  
saw the bleed of green high above. You grabbed  
my hair, pulled back my head to kiss  
the jugular ridge as if I would  
splash across your feet if you didn't  
catch me in your mouth.

On the drive home, both you and your dog  
were sick. His chewed-up kelp strands:  
jaundiced goose necks lumped on the back seat.  
The flood of fever burning your face.

III.

When will I stop feeling angry?  
You left me alone, led me too close to the cliff,  
a spiny hemlock exposed, ravaged.

Below the ocean roils, anemones and kelp bulbs  
crushed in its wrath.

At night in bed I angle my back  
against your ghost, soak myself in dreams.