

Or is it to bury myself in this watery metaphor. Buried with him in almost-death.

I rise like a resurrection at night sometimes since then, springing up, upright, from my bedcovers like a sudden rushing up from baptismal waters. Choking, gasping, coughing—drowning. Some slippery, elastic liquid stretching down my trachea to my lungs. Perhaps acid rising from the stomach, the doctors postulate. Or anxiety, fear, coating, closing the throat. After the scope up my nose, down my esophagus, they still do not know.

What I do know now: how to respond to that morbid parlor-game about preferred methods of death: The worst way to die would be drowning.

I say I am afraid of flying, of crashing, when friends urge me to vacation with them across the ocean. But perhaps the actual fear is the imagined drowning: By some miraculous misfortune, continued consciousness for that final baptism from on high.

On a ledge over the river that flows backward through my city, my legs dangle, my tears drip toward the polluted water. A fitting metaphor after this heartbreak. An apropos personification, too: a mourning, weeping companion. Then the shadow of a woman, bending over, covers me. Are you OK? she asks, alarmed. My face is blank until I understand. Almost smile. I would find an easier way than to drown.

When I walk across my city's bridges, my heels tapping inches from the edge, my hands floating higher than the rail, my eyes pressing hard against the glances of the strangers, the could-be criminals, who might shove me into the brackish green below, I wonder why I live in this city of rivers. This city by the lake. This city erected on a swamp. Noxious water flowing through its veins.