

of new belonging, new worship, here, as a whole family, all covered by the water and the blood.

And then the robe was billowing and the pastor was smiling and his hand was reaching and the dance was starting and my arm was entwining and my nose was closing and my head was dipping and the sound was vanishing and the world was returning and the water—the water was warm.

So because I was floating afterward in my Sunday dress, bobbing with buoyant relief, smiling beside my parents in the pew, waiting for the announcement of our family as new church members at the end of the service, because I was wondering whether all my fears might be just as easily washed away, I did not notice, for a moment, that the hair against my neck was still wet.

And the water was oh, so cold.

“Danger No Swimming,” warns the sign above the shoreline rocks at my favorite lakefront park. “Keep Off Rocks,” a yellow banner instructs. I always obey.

From the grass behind the cement barrier that separates my blanket from the rocky waves each Saturday afternoon, I watch the ducks and seagulls and geese float by. Two by two. Male and female. Lifetime lovers. Baptizing their beaks, their gleaming feathery heads, every so often in the endless purity.

Genesis 2:25: “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

At the clear tanks that envelop the beluga whales at the aquarium, or