

I fuck my next boyfriend — my first real lover — in a hot tub in the corner of a hotel room. His body dominant, bending forward like a baptizer, covering my naked form with his in the mirror above the splashing tub.

My belief has dried up by now, blotted by the pages of library books accumulating on my sofa. Questioning how just one religion could be right. Suggesting how all religions — sprinklers and pourers and submergers alike — are all likely wrong. All fake. Like man-made lakes. But though my belief may be wiped away, my fear remains. Like leftover sediment. Or more like an incessant leak.

Fear was my first, preverbal language, seeping into my mother's watery womb at my first, prenatal church services. This a religion — a supposed relationship with the creator — whose dogma was fear.

Deuteronomy 10:12: "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God." Proverbs 3:7: "Fear the Lord, and depart from evil." Psalm 111:10: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Psalm 33:8: "Let all the earth fear the Lord." Matthew 10:28: "Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Fears that were embodied in the bodily fluids of sex and desire (an incomplete list): Pregnancy. Infection. Rejection. Loss of reputation. Punishment from God.

Is the condom still on? Is it too wet? Sticking, catching in the water? Is the penis unprotected? Uncovered? My body twists in the pulsing hot tub, my eyes searching, checking to be sure the rubber has not ripped with the friction. Floated away.

I try to float, earlier, in the hotel pool, where this second boyfriend tries