

*Wild*

by

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Come summertime the mothers run wild. When the children and the partners and the households are asleep, the mothers climb out their bedroom windows. They slip through unlatched patio and laundry doors. They dart across black lawns and down shadowed suburban streets. They skirt the conscious edges of the neighbourhood and congregate beyond the city limits on the banks of the fast-flowing river.

The youngest, most respectable-looking mothers bring cartons of beer and wine and cigarettes. And the mothers gather round to drink and smoke and gossip. They shed their skins and skylark in the shallows of the river, diamond droplets shining on their shoulders and in their hair. They toast the great discoveries in art and science they will one day make. They boast and dream on grand, ambitious scales.

And should one mother find herself dragged out into the river, to the centre of the river where the undertow is fierce and all-consuming, the other mothers will hear her scream and turn to her as one. They will watch her in the water from the safety of the riverbank. They will see her splash and struggle. They will witness as she chokes and gasps and howls and groans and weakens and is dragged down by the unrelenting current.

Whispering goodnights, farewells, the mothers disappear. And the riverbank is empty. And the river is alone in the final hours of the night. And the next day when a mother sees a mother in the post office or the playground or the street, they greet each other and exchange pleasantries about the weather.