

*Wet*

by

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Lena pressed her baby lips to her mother's sweat-stained cheek. To Valery it felt like the first inconsequential raindrop of a downpour. Lena scrunched her nose and balled her hands into fists as if she could taste the salt or couldn't contain the joy. It was Lena's first intentional kiss. Valery softly smiled while her weary eyes tried to lie. She knew her baby had learned from watching "daddy" and "mommy." She knew it was because Pedro liked to kiss her goodnight, just once on the cheek. Valery used to scrunch her nose too.

When Lena is awake Pedro likes to kiss Valery on the cheek. When Lena is asleep Pedro kisses Valery everywhere but. He bites her rounded, perfectly brown neck. He sucks on her hardened nipples, which used to be soft. He floats his tongue towards her thighs, near the curve of her hips. His hands roam in remembrance.

Valery's oversized t-shirt is half off. Her thin sweatpants rest near her ankles, while his shirt stays firmly on. He quickly moves down while they still have time. Pedro's eyes lock onto her stretch marks, old and new. Stretch marks like rivers stream down her heavy hips and her soft stomach. The rivers are so wild they twist into thousands of tributaries. She knows how his fingers glide like rafts over white rapids of skin. Sometimes they look silver in the moonlight.

Pedro moves his lips to meet hers at the center, where the rivers originate. Valery scrunches her nose as she holds his head down. Their breath stays quiet, almost demure, when partial pants of exertion escape parted lips. When the rapids become rougher and she says "more," he holds on. She feels the whimper, then the moan, finally the scream climbing from

her throat but not to her lips. She's suspended at the surface, floating in the silver. The split second before she rises, Lena screams and breaks the night. Pedro stops, releases his hold, jumps out of the water, and becomes "daddy" once more. Valery remembers when the screams at midnight were her own. The feeling dissipates like a cloying mist.

The current slows as she traces the rivulets of sweat past the rivers of stretch marks on her skin. Now stilled and stagnant, "daddy" brings Lena to see "mommy." She pulls her t-shirt on and her sweatpants up forgetting to remember what once was. As she takes Lena in her arms, Pedro kisses Valery on the cheek. Just once. It is dry. As he leaves to warm a bottle she rises and carries Lena on her hip.

When Valery and Pedro were younger, they were once told "water remembers." While "mommy" thought about when wet changed to dry, Lena kissed her again. And again. This time "mommy" scrunched her nose and kissed Lena back. She knew when and why.