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## Wet

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## ••WET

CHRISTOPHER MERKNER

We thank god for quarter of the hour, when the whistle's blown, and the children must file from the water and crash into the rubber-strap seats beside us. We can drop the pretense of desperate vigilance.

If we are without children, as we sometimes are in our fantasies, we can plunge ourselves into the pool's fine cool and remember a time when such days were drunk on the frank and unflagging erotic. Or, I am lured to the water's edge by a direct solicitation. It comes at a good time. I am flattered. She is in the water. She snaps her fingers. I stand, approach.

She says she wants to date me.

I laugh.

"Sleep with," she says.

"But," I answer, turning, "him?" My son is swaddled in a large beach towel.

She props her arms on the cement edge of the pool and then throws her chin toward a group of three or four boys wrestling over a ball in the grass. "They don't even know I'm here."

I say, "But he's only two."

"Who isn't?"

I am thinking, *I guess I could bring him with us* when she grabs my hand, pulls me, hurls me from the water's edge into the pool.

When I resurface, she is out of the pool, laughing with other women in rubber-strapped seats. She is exchanging high fives. My son is over there with them, and he is laughing. The women have their arms all over him, kissing him. *Is daddy all wet?*

I lie back in the water and do a backstroke. At the top of the hour, God will trouble the pool, swift currents and heavy splashing, legs squirting past mine, yelling and screaming and cursing and crying. It seems right.