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Ralph Steiner, *Surf and Seaweed* (1931)

“Come to the shore and hear the waves!” A seaside calls out to me, each gurgling roar louder as my feet sink into the sand. “Step closer; come let us wash over you. We will crash urgently against your skin; we’ll bubble at your ankles. Your fingers will begin to prune and your body will shiver, but stay still. The water knows what to do with you.”

I step in slowly, savoring each jet of cold. The ankles of my pants darken and cling to my legs. Another step, my shirt hangs heavy off of my chest. Another step! My hair drips down my face! Salt tickles my mouth! A rushing stream knocks me off of my feet, but the fall does not hurt. I will stay right here, I will let the foamy waves shine against my skin, I will let each new crash saturate me until I sink below the sand. How beautiful a crash can be! How tranquil her rage, how comforting her chaos!

Soon, each wave soaring above my head will break a piece of me with it. Take these pieces, dear water! Take my tears, my anger, my despair, bring them somewhere far where they cannot hurt me. Take, too, my laughter, my smile, my spirit, let them float along the surface so they may brush against the grass, sink into the earth, return to those I have loved the most. Take it all! Everything that I truly need now will remain here, just below the surface.

The water fills my lungs, and the cold disappears. There is warmth, there is joy, and finally there is the most beautiful nothing. All at once, the water stills; I have been taken exactly where I am meant to go.



[Photo submission: Aiden Kelly]