

The Lesson

By Elliot Vale

Up to my cold shoulders in the deep end,
the water round my neck, a slack noose.
You talked me into letting you let me down,
rung by rung, when everyone else had gone
to change. There was no way to tread, then wade,
then switch to swimming as smooth as an otter
pouring itself into a stream. I had to begin
at the end, coming to the end as a new
beginning. But *No*, I said, *No*, and again, *No*,
the empty hall echoing back my howl.
And you said *Yes*
till I released my fist from the railing, and with it
half my fear, turning to face the shallows,
a home I had to go back to so I could know
I'd left it for good. You carried me until
I carried myself, happy that you took no
No for an answer.

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