

Glacier 1

The room was huge and cold. The glacier's skin smelled like pine, snowcloud, bog, lichen. There were stanchions around the ice so the audience wouldn't touch or lick its weeping face. Some people had brought their children. Our brains stuttered. *Who could ever—What would possess— Who would want—* I didn't like the exposure. Whenever I heard a spurt of knee-high laughter, whenever one looked up at me thinking I was its mother, I felt stripped of another layer of clothing. Everyone knows that children smell fear, but they smell shame even better. By the time the lights dimmed I was naked and didn't know what to do with my hands and arms. I couldn't cover everything. For an additional five-hundred dollars you could mount a ladder and point a hair dryer at the glacier for two minutes. With your gun of hot air you could shape the surface into pits—a gentle divot for an eye, a more forceful one for a mouth. You could make sweat run from armpits, from the small of a slick back. Any meltwater was yours to keep. We had heard that some people had vials from all five glaciers lined up on their mantles like Hummels. Pictures were free, but we didn't take any. It felt pornographic—all that melting, all those crowds. One couple recorded their entire session, the machines blinking and blinking, their voices tangling as they narrated. I stared at the ceiling. I rubbed the ticket stub in my pocket until it pilled into pulp. We didn't talk in the car. When we got home I was so thirsty. Like wanting to have sex after a funeral. I stood in the shower and let the water spray haphazardly into my mouth. There was so little I hardly had to swallow. I bent over the sink and cupped my hands to my mouth over and over and over again. I put my mouth directly over the faucet and hummed. This sounds like a metaphor but isn't. I'm just talking about water.