

HENNI ALFTAN, MATT HILVERS, RUTH IGE, ANDREW SIM
KARMA, NEW YORK, 2019.

by Sarah Blakley-Cartwright

Stabilize the fruit with one hand, while the other guides the stinging edge to center. Fingernails dyed orange. Something to bring. Open-air, out on the tender, supplies at hand, watching at a slant. One hand is four inches and the raft is twenty of those. Seven feet, not more. Shoulders pitched, skewed, at an angle. Hand me an oar. No need. Propelling is a silent operation, hand-operated, outboard. Something out the corner of his eye. A blunt instrument endeavors, a grasping organ, slipping in, submerging, eclipsed. Familiar confusions. She's grabbing for what he can't see now, light blocked by depth. A warm day turned cold at its edges. Carefully avoid discussion, deliberate to avoid harm. No hand on deck. Light is absorbed and scatters. The psychology surrounding water. It reduces him. She is veiled, retains her secrecy. She is organized, she has the matter in hand.

To say on the one hand is to pledge to consider the other. Down there, she is pulling a lever. A deep pit, mottled. From a shallow angle, he can see edges. Drifting now, miles from land. And feeling insulated. It's the murk of it. A newborn is seventy-eight percent water. She is a hot knife through butter. The motor waits. Reflection clings like shadow, doubled over the horizon crease, interfering between moments. Time folds, intersects, an imperfect copy, and the parallel fades. What he can't see is blue, a difference of depth, it exceeds his reach.

And later he is still feeling partial while she keeps pace, flat-candid on the balls of her feet, heels and bare. Hand me my glass. Water gone milk. Human bones are made of it. Objects look closer. A pencil will bend. Light travels. Out there, it's coming down now. A rich-saturated parcel of air fattens and plummets. Ankle tilts precarious, and the glass tips, suspended, where time stopped. What is nearly empty is abundant in part. He knows what this is: causal isolation. Back on land but more at sea. One of a pair—the material one implies the immaterial other. What humans do with their hands. Complete and freestanding, one with reference to no other, what is this but floating?