

## OUTING, IOWA

If you've ever doubted that a body can transform completely, take the highway north from town, past the crowded diner with the neon sign for pork loin sandwiches, and go left at the arrow for the lake. Can I tell you? The land where I was born was born an ocean, and that ocean born of ice. Researchers and floodplains have undressed its chipped-up secret: plates shifted, glaciers melted into river, into rows of corn that flipbook past your car. Park anywhere and follow the trail back in time toward the effigy mounds, the sacred piles of earth we've managed to preserve, and all that's buried underneath. I still bleed, still weep: what we used to be matters. Here's a brachiopod, here's me twirling in a gauzy blue dress in the afternoon sun. Trace these fossils with your tongue and place them in my hands, which will never be any larger. Lay your ear against an iceberg while there's time and sing to me its trickle. Lift a geode from the ground and crack me open. I'll sparkle so hard you'll forget you thought this land was flat, as though you'd never find the valley, bedrock, ancient sea.