

14.

The rainbow clams try to burrow into my hand. I feel their feet pressing into the fleshly part of the thumb. They continue to try even though my hand gives them resistance. In their minds, they continue to push because everything must give. They do not know what to do without pushing.

They stop and hang suspended in the wet sand. I wonder if I've killed them. Worn their little hearts out. Burst their lungs. I spread the sand thin so I can see their shapes and the pastels: purple, pink, blue, white, cream, yellow, orange. They are all there, about double the size of a grain of rice.

I put my hand into the water, just under the surface. The motion sways them out of my hand as the silt filters, becoming less and less sand and more and more water until my hand is empty. I brush it with the other to get the last bit of sand out of the folds.

If the clams survive, they will sink to the floor and again bury, this time to a place that will support them. If I killed them by not being sand, by being a hand that did not give, they will float and move through the shallows until they sink and rest on the bottom instead of in it.

I dive my hands into the sand to find crabs. I feel a large one push away from my hand. It gets away. I scoop two large handfuls of sand and again feel animals pushing down, trying to find darkness and to be in a place that is right for their bodies.

The water is like that for me, but not entirely. When I am in it, I am not of it. The water repels me. You can look at it both ways. It supports me too.

I have a dream of sky-beaten, salt-bloated Samira dead on the beach. I have nothing to give her.