The curtains, faded and worn, hang limply from the hooks. I look through wood-framed panes, the glass flawed, distorting slightly the view from inside. The frames and the window sill are painted a dark color. The paint chips in some spots to reveal layers of old paint beneath. I lean over the bed and look through. I am among the trees. They are eye-level and the sunlight flutters through the leaves, the breezes stir and above the branches I glimpse the blue sky.

I reach across the bed, place my left hand on the wide windowsill, and grasp the handle at the center of the window. I pull up to release the latch, the old metal presses sharply against the insides of my fingers. I pull both windows open. They fold inward, pressing the curtains away and off to the side. There is no screen. First, I hear the breeze shushing through the branches of the trees, the birds, and the chatter of squirrels among the leaves. Then beneath it and around it, I hear the river. I see it too now, as I look over the roof of the porch beneath my window. I hear it trickling around the bend in the river and babble over the pile of rocks that lie just beyond the bend. The sunlight sparkles among its ripples, whirlpools, and still, silent pools. I hear the springy screech, slam, rattle of the old screen door and my dad’s heavy footfalls on the wooden floor of the porch below me as he brings in bags from the car. I can’t see them, but I hear my sisters’ voices as their feet scuffle down the path and clap down the metal steps of the bridge.

I lean out and breathe. First, pine needles. Then woods and green leaves. Beneath it, around it, I smell the damp, black earth near the dock that surrounds the river. The damp, black earth speckled with blue forget-me-nots. I can barely make them out from here; I can barely see the dock through the leaves.

I take another breath and drink in the moment.