

ALYSSA JEWELL

A CROSSING AT THE RIO GRANDE

They stretch in a show of all that matters: the riders' arms and hands long
across the river's face as if to touch cotton lint voices the sound of home.

This is how we become sligher:

out of the sky's green summer darkness

a body rolls onto a different shore, waves turned back
as a scroll, ink-drenched with trying to write new life.

Did I ever know about hunger, the way it burrows into the heart?

In my own city, I saw wanting cracked open: a purple shell, soft
and held to the light like a child offering up his first painting

in an act of trust,

new alphabets traced in smudged pencil, blackened fingers pointing

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homeward on a map.

I stood, knees yielding under cross currents, looked to see
if someone else was watching too, wanted another to take account
of the horses' constant forward through the flood and slag, to remember
the way they vanished like copper needles into the trees.