

Richard Siken

THE TORN-UP ROAD

1.

There is no way to make this story interesting.

A pause, a road, the taste of gravel in the mouth. The little rocks dig into my skin
like arrowheads.

And then the sense of being smothered underneath a large sack of lentils
or potatoes, or of a boat at night slamming into the dock again
without navigation, without consideration,

heedless of the planks of wood that are the dock,
that make up the berth itself.

The boy will not get up.

And, strangely, I am trying to spell both of our names at once.

2.

I want to tell you this story without having to confess anything,
without having to say that I ran out into the street to prove something,
that he didn't love me,
that I wanted to be possessed, thrown over, that I wanted to have the wounds
nailed shut.

I want to tell you this story without having to be in it:

Max in the wrong clothes. Max at the party, drunk again.

Max in the kitchen, in refrigerator light, his hands around the neck of a beer.

Tell me we're dead and I'll love you even more.

I'm surprised that I say it with feeling.

There's a thing in my stomach about this. A simple thing. The last rung.

3.

Can you see them there, by the side of the road,
not moving, not wrestling,
making a circle out of the space between the circles? Can you see them
pressed into the gravel, pressed into the dirt,

6.

I thought that you might help me get to Heaven in this road movie where
we don't go anywhere.

So I have feelings. So I have them for you.

So I didn't think you'd try to stop me.

7.

I can see myself up ahead, in the distance, by the side of the road.

I'm spitting up blood again. I'm spitting up blood.

You stand outside the film and don't include yourself in the picture.

O velocity, not all of us love the feeling as the car zooms off.

And velocity, not all of us are bracing ourselves for impact.