

DENNIS SCHMITZ

Rivers

Carried along by things—Charlotte's
bad eyes, in-laws, the instants
of sexual transport, school do's—any series

starts a river. In nature,
the trickle under the culvert you stoop

to go in, shoes absorbing.
Swing-clink & cries from the asphalted
playground are back there—

it's suburban but Chicago—
around you, ailanthus

& the crawlholes kids use. You wet your face,
you splash maps onto your shirt.

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In its own Forest
Preserve, the Chicago-choked Sangamon

spreads only feet wide. It's stew-brown
from spring flood, elm & bramble mush nudged
by counter-currents until the daubwork

ripples meet—*downstream* is what a river says.