

10

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*On a Scale of One to Ten*  
*Ceylan Scott*

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**Chicken  
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*To my mama*



# Then

The two girls had been drinking since three, a swig for every crash of the river. The Golden Virginia they were smoking like shrivelled worms falling out of rolling paper. They tried to blow rings in the sticky air.

Failing.

Giggling.

Heads spinning. Could be the alcohol, could be the heat.

Now it was late, and the sky was pale pink, like the smooth inside of a conch. Cans of cider glinted in the grass and trees flopped like vast ivory wigs, heavy from the weeks of rain. Henna patterned the girls' bare arms, a memory of windswept festivals bleeding colour.

The blonde girl swigged.

The second girl made daisy chains the lengths of her legs. She picked them up and threw them into the river, where they floated like tiny lilies. A crow leered over a piece of overgrilled bacon from a discarded barbecue. It squawked, its black eyes shining. The girls talked.

The first girl beckoned to the surging river ahead of them, brown and black and foaming. They laughed. The second girl nodded.

Their fingers interlocked in a drunken clasp and they swayed as they stood up. They didn't put any shoes on. The weir in front of them shouted.

'We're such idiots,' said the blonde girl.

'Such idiots.'

They stumbled over soapy tangles of moss and their calves turned pink with the cold. The branches of a dead tree sprawled like bones and the blonde girl's faded lilac streaks echoed the sunset.

'Jump, Iris,' she said. 'I'll follow you.'