

NARRATIVE ESSAY

Hypernatremia

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Late summer presses down—
A sweltering week, shimmering
Out beyond that old Airstream,
One wheel off in the tamarisk—
A furnace of gleaming chrome
Where the old man slowly dried
Like an ancient lake, a pan of salt,
In a desert between a Tigris
And Euphrates of choice,
Unaware of the cool tap, sitting
Right there, pumped from far
Granite ranges in California—
Free water, dammed and diverted.
I wonder if he turned and saw
The sinful city's dusty ruin—
Flesh to dough and blood to brine.
And I, the white coat water bearer,
Do the only human thing, a drink
To the fallen soldier. Dream,
Please dream of boats and beaches
While water does its work.