

SOUTH OF THE RIVER

You always ask me why I look sad,
so sad,
so troubled.

You always loom up with your face near mine,
so I can see your boyish features close to,
smell your soap,
your shampoo,
your scent -
you.

I can only shake my head;
if you don't know, how can I explain?

If you don't instinctively understand
how your presence here tonight
both thrills and terrifies,
simultaneously both warms and freezes,

how I'm acutely aware the whole time,
even though I maybe prefer to talk to other people,
to be across the room,

how I'm watching you,
seeing you,

you and nobody else -

(I guess you just want me to say it.

And inevitably I don't.

Can't.

How could I?)

I just shake my head and stare floorwards.

I'm okay.

(Only you don't believe me,

won't believe me,

know I'm not.

You've seen me okay, and this isn't it.

You want me to say something.

You want us to maybe go outside -

So we can talk.

So we can -

(Only I can't because I can't relax with you.)

(Because relaxed would be my head on your shoulder -)

(Where it belongs)

(Because relaxed would be my hand in your hand -)

(Where it belongs)

(Only I can't because I have an all-too-vivid memory

of a night once shared

not so very long ago.)

Only I can't because -

I can't -

I always look sad, so sad, so troubled

because you're here tonight.

(But you knew that anyway.)