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## Selkie Woman

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## Selkie Woman

There are women who wind around salty fronds,  
Slip their bellies across the sea's sandy tongue.  
They wear seal coats, sleek and spotted with black glass patches.  
When they tire of dark and pressing weight, they ascend,  
Pull away from the soft sea floor,  
Rise to smack their heads against a draping sky.  
The air is thin. It can't carry their leaping bodies.  
So these women crawl onto a rocky shore,  
Scraping their elbows raw.  
They shed their fine coats, their wide eyes,  
Their freckled cheeks.  
Pale skin tingles dry in view of the fat moon.

These first cold moments last longer than a lifetime of warm safety.  
She spreads out her coat on the rocks and turns her naked back to it,  
Toes kneading pebbles and strands of seaweed long dead.  
Her blood babbles under her drying skin.  
She savors the taste of air flowing through her in a tide.  
This woman raises her arms, pressing her palms against the looming sky.

In the moment she turns, the fisherman sees her coat,  
Sees her swaying, a reed, a sea flower.  
He sees the way the water slides from her skin,  
Knows what this woman is.  
The fisherman steals her long coat, pulls it close to his chest,

Breathes in its ocean smell and buries it.  
There is a pressing force under his collarbone  
Moving his hands into the ground, and he is terrified.  
Her skin is gone.

And she turns again. She sees him.  
She sees a place where her skin once lay open.  
Bending she sighs, remembers the fate of women who shed their long seal  
coats.  
She becomes a woman who once belonged to the sea.