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First Dead Fish Girl

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First Dead Fish Girl

Amaya Willems

One of our kin was murdered
 First full moon of her fourth year
 First rising upstream of being
 She was to be alone

We understand how it must be strange to come across a fish girl throwing her essence upstream,
 thrashing in the silver foam
 But to pelt her with hardened earth from across the way, safe on your kingdom of rock
 Our daughter didn't realize she was being killed until the water bled red

We found her body reduced to a pulp
 Of blood and scales, bits of stone wedged into pink flesh
 The blowfly maggots already sucking its blue-grey bones clean
 Quietly floating, drifting our thoughts through the sludge to mourning
 Then the scuffle of rocks

Quickly—

Dive into the tangle of grass
 Caress the moss green scales of our arms
 As the feet thoughtlessly push more stones into the stream
 Advance, approach

We watch as a pair of human hands slip
 Into our surface

They are a mother's hands
 Are earth solid
 Rock and tree trunk
 Strong
 Enough to lift its decomposing weight

We consider drowning her
 Payment in kind, a softer death by water than by earth
 And the river needs its body, its scales flaking into the mouths of the maggots
 But our sister sends the current
 Which ripples through our bodies and speaks:

Let

So we do
 We do not understand how strange it must be to come across
 A dead red bloated fish girl
 And feel compassion.

Take good care of it

As the last of her grey fingers
 Leave us wanting without
 The dead