2022

First Dead Fish Girl

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Recommended Citation
Willems, Amaya (2022) "First Dead Fish Girl," Exile: Vol. 68: No. 1, Article 15.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile/vol68/iss1/15

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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