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## Old Woman to the River

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## OLD WOMAN TO THE RIVER

Am I a fool?  
Old enough to say no  
to blood that tells me I am young,  
younger than the child whose passion  
ran a hot straight line, barbed hook  
set twenty years in veins of that  
first flaxen boy.

Loyal beyond will  
I ride your milk-blue rapids  
fishing with glacier mothers—mothers  
cold as knives, who cut a bed in liquid  
stone those days when time was ice.  
I love to raft this river.  
Each rock is danger, and aspens  
rattle silver from moss-covered banks.

At the end of my line  
a rainbow leaps and plunges.  
My hook will hold, even in winter,  
coated with crystal, cracking and snapping  
like a fine-tuned vessel, a Viking  
ship of Cornish glass. He caught me then  
and bound my waist with willow chains. A dream  
fish larger than rivers, flying against the sun.  
We built our cabin on the shore and studied  
movement of stones. Now he swims in ancient  
air and laughs at worms, my rainbow at  
midnight, a dragonfly's wing.

I'm fishing once again,  
dog-toothed violets at my feet  
like migratory fowl. Birds of America,  
we cleanse the sky of grief. I cast my fly  
in mountain pools. Trumpets in the wind

guitars and tambourines! Songs of gypsy  
grandmothers sing in my genes. It's  
time to take up dancing.

Downstream the river breaks.  
Speckled tails and sun-flecked  
leaves and in the autumn cottonwoods  
shadow lions are stalking.  
We never change.  
Blood runs the same dark line.  
My heart's a cave of mirrors.