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The Drought Walkers

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THE DROUGHT WALKERS

They move like shallow breathing past riverbeds and dull-eyed deer they stop to listen near old turtle shells their fish belly hands touch brown yarrow the wind burns across wrist and tongue even as they kneel with children by forked sticks hoping to be asked about sorrow of jawbone and socket the way they have become dull histories

One will whisper of lizards the absence of dogs behind them what happened to the hearts of the women

At evening they lie down lighter than ashes their eyes gather moonlight brittle as old snakeskins slowly stars cross the sky slowly they count the hours until first light trickles down mountains and they rise by blackbirds their hearts are the gray ends of rivers boxes of dust hear them Christ hear them near moss and empty barns these small drying things of the world