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Memory of the Hand

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Memory of the Hand

The hand recalls what it has held,
the fist of the truth wedged inside the knuckles,

fitting into the drum of things you cared about,
lifting its memory to allow you

to be alone when
you are not alone,

forcing you to reach out, take care
of that memory you made up with your hands,

the one about taking your father's arm
you have never held,

helping him cross the street
where you let him go

without waving goodbye or making
a fist at him in anger.

The hand aches for what it has held,
mist washing its fingers

like a smoke where you hide your knowledge
of a sign language, a movement of joints,

palms and fingers trying to spell
that silent moment when

you touched what moved out
of your reach—

a soft yearning, a bare back,
the tiny mountain range of spine rising

to remind you the hand holds onto little flesh,
knows nothing about the skin except lines

on its own palm, deep furrows where
the weight of remembrance is held.