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Twins

Brent Armendinger

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BRENT ARMENDINGER

Twins

Remus spooned his palm over his twin's
night blue knuckles. Unlit by cloud-
eaten sky, hushed by black river tongue
on the basket meant to drown them. Fugitive
longing dug inside Romulus' dreamveins,
hiding from fish smell, from jackals
shouting *whore* out kitchen
windows, from mother's wrists
scarred raw by the rope's fray.
Her knees cut with leaf prints and mud
Rhea filled a basket with hatched
bird eggs and feathers. A clothed face whispered:
egg shells would help the basket float.
She dreamed her sons would fly
to the planet their father became, red
glow around her sky in circles.

Sex is our molecules in orbit between the husks of self.

A wolf found two brothers
asleep against shore-rocks,
egg shells all around them. She bit the grief
off their necks, she licked
the hunger off their eyelids. (suckled
by wolf, sacred to Mars) Romulus
clotted quick and set the basket on fire
to warm his shivering twin. Remus sucked out
the hot color of waves breaking
inside his brother, Romulus howling
music into his bones. Their pores widened

and the air around their bodies throbbed
into a flock of woodpeckers.

Remus watched them buckle-dance
through a window in his brother's skin.
(suckled by woodpecker, sacred to Mars)

Or, I hang my skin on a hook and wait inside you for my lungstrings to open.

At morning a herdsman, wolf blood underground.
Romulus strung the animal tooth around his neck
and learned the muscle of metal in mud.

The whip on cattle back. A new mother called
Division. She hid her breast from sodden
Remus. Romulus pushed inside his brother until
wail clouds thundered quick over him, eyes closed
and intention dissolved in the spit of sleep.

At swallowed-moon Remus
snuck back to the shore, scratched the wolfbite
open under water to fill his arteries
with sorrow, to trade iron for river companion.

At sunrise Romulus built a city wall.

Remus jumped the rivercliff
and split into rock; it spilled
what craved inside him. A flock
of woodpeckers licked him clean
and scattered in nine hundred arrows.