Old Woman to the River

Annick Smith

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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
Annick Smith

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.