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## psychic distance draws a line down the middle of me // river as reaper

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NATALIE HAYES

# psychic distance draws a line down the middle of me

i scrub my skin with salt  
until the grains' raised red lines begin to blur  
into the red plaid-patterned tablecloth of childhood home.  
this skin feels more familiar somehow;  
i look more like myself like this  
(rubbed raw and bleeding)

so lay me down, i guess.

cut to my sweat-stick back cementing itself to the hardwood  
such that i am centered on the dining room floor.  
i feel steely forks and spoons against my hot skin  
and the ceramic base of your plate soothes my throbbing skull.  
eat off or from me. put this body to good use  
(as i certainly have not)

now sit me back up

and perhaps at last you will understand the weight of body  
when brain is little more than an amalgamation of rocks.

my head is heavy and stagnant  
and the pressed powder of prescription pill barely masquerades the cold  
cobble glistening of gray matter; in the right lighting,  
i look no different than before  
(still gray-brained and mostly breathing)

let me sit steady in this

pattern of refusal; i store everything behind my eyes until i am absolutely  
and unbearably full and then release all at once. after a long and unforgiving  
six months of ignorance, i cry three times in one day.

NATALIE HAYES

## river as reaper

crawfish falls from the sky and lands in my lap:

i imagine what you were when you still moved  
(and my skin crawls, but i don't tell you that)  
and where is the thing that brought you to me?

big bird with shit grip  
snatches you from shallow waters  
and names you supper

but you are too hard to be held that tight  
and so you fall to my front lawn.

i want to know whether or not  
you looked back at the bird as you fell  
and if you did, were you laughing? or were you  
asking to be eaten instead? the passage

from tongue  
to throat  
then stomach  
is warmer, at least

and perhaps if eaten you would have returned,  
albeit unrecognizable, to your river.

it is just so hard to see when you are moving that fast;  
maybe stomach acid would've taken its time with you.