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Adolescence

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ADOLESCENCE

The winter her body no longer fit, walking felt like swimming in blue jeans and a flannel shirt. Everything stuck to her skin: gum wrappers, Band-Aids, leaves. How she envied the other girls, especially the kind who turned into birds. They were the ones boys hand-tamed, training them to eat crumbs from their palms or sing on cue. What she would have done for a red crest and a sharp beak, for a little square of blue sky to enter her like wings. But it was her role to sink so the others could rise, hers to sleep so the others could dance. If only her legs weren't too sodden to lift, if only her buttons were unfastened by the water she kept swimming through, and she could extract from the shadow of her breasts a soul as soft as a silk brassiere, beautiful and useless, like a castle at the bottom of the sea.