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TWO AT THE DOCK

Father, you tell me of your mother
who’s come down to the dock
and caught a small fish.
It’s shining as she lifts it.
Its silver scales reflect the morning sun.
I see her small precise eyes winking,
the silhouette of her hair like mine
in waves and curls, the backs of her hands
old with splotches.
They move over the fins expertly,
detaching the hook from the open mouth.
Blood of the gill runs
under the nail of her thumb.

I do not forgive you that neglect:
three-two years lonely
in a cold house of high ceilings
and photographs of Southern men.
I hear the echo of her feet
on the bare floor of the parlor.
She walks loping like me on bent legs.
But today she has come down to the dock
to see you and has caught a small fish.
There is joy in her face which is
beautiful in the sun.

You watch all this from some distance,
mending your nets, planning your day.