

I watch you, beheading

Maggie Burton

Senior Poetry

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capelin at the kitchen sink. Dead long before
you gathered them last summer, they were simply
tricked by high tide, by fog,
by the promise of rolling
back out to spawn in peace,
never having known you.

I hear them, singing, rehearsing,
lamenting, performing an ode to the freedom of oceans
somehow still resonating, settling in my ears for me to live with.

The tendons on the backs of your thumbs startle me
as you pop off their heads. I am struck by the quick
parallel lines that appear only to recede once again
under the thin skin of hands. Did you catch
my darting eyes? I panic. I imagine you, pulling up
the base of my skeletal self, your fingers
tugging at it like a piece of knitting made so tight
that it would never fit anyway.

You smile at me, I lose it—if I shut my eyes

I see myself, joining the nautical chorus,
all of us warbling together as my head plops on top
of the never-closing mouths of voiceless vertebrates in the kitchen sink.