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The Fish of Me

Patty Devlin

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The Fish of Me

(it is not at all what i expected)

it is gray

the leaves have fallen and disintegrated

my drive through town, over the bridge and to the left, winding on that narrow stretch between the mountainside and the riverbank, is uncomfortably canopyless.

and ice is choking the river.

but it is winter

and i am twenty

instead of seven

when my grandparents looked young and my parents were

when my cousin and i took our baths for the day underneath the pontoon boat – shedding our suits in seconds and making sure we put the shampoo and soap in their nooks underneath. so that they wouldn't float away or sink.

when i looked up at our mountain, and thought i could have seen one of the injuns my

grandfather warned me about behind a tree

when they told me my mom was queen of the Susquehanna

when they called me a fish

and i thought it was good

I can remember it slowly dismantling

when the Injun and arrow story became charming

or when those adjunct professors put siding up on my grandparents' house in town

or when we lost the fight and they took our stone walkway out and put up the dike

and why didn't they know that i was a duck, not a fish

I didn't want to be hurried along to the Me that must think like this

And wonder about the symbolism in it being called Lock Haven

maybe it's because someone else, who I don't know, is living in Mimi and Biggie's

house along the river

so that I cannot stop and visit

maybe it's because I wonder if we'll ever all be back there together

but then I remember that I am not seven or even twelve

but twenty and driving past.

by Patty Devlin