

Rhonda Ganz

Catching rain in a paper bag

Because I loved water, father loved me best. Body of water.
Body of evidence. My father face-down at water's edge.

Foul play is not suspected. If missing is the same as disappeared,
I disappear my father's face, his waders, frogsong and the putt-putt

of his Evinrude short-shaft as we crossed the lake home.
Cross out lake, cross out stream, cross out marsh

at lake's edge where the cattails grow. Carve the word tadpole
into the rock wall at the far end of the lake. The future needs a name

for shallow imprints of back legs and a tail in layers of
hardened sediment. Under sidewalk, under cul-de-sac,

under parking lot, a fossil trail from used-to-be-lake
down used-to-be-stream. My father showed me where water went

to die. We would lie down in the middle of the road,
ears pressed to the pavement, "Here," he'd say,

"There used to be a pond here. A heron once stood still here."
Red-winged blackbirds and cattails and Jesus bugs out of the lexicon.

In the official version, my father drowns. In mine, he gives his last breath
to the lake trout, imploring them to grow eyelids and elbows.

Adapt or die. Lake trout and my father out of the lexicon.
This happened in a past life. Drownings now as rare as leprosy.

A bathtub on display in the water museum labelled artifact: 21st century.
In this life, I am having trouble swallowing liquids.

Have as many children as you can, my doctor says,
you are evolving to eat sand.