

2020: 25 Years after the War, I Visit my Father's Home in *Makarska* While the Sound of his Empty Room Lulls me to Sleep.

In Makarska, the sun drags on in the sky like the stain
of a peachdrop in my Baka's white tea.

Summer's cough dragging on
like my father's last Marlboro

down by the beachbluffs,
crouched by the porcelain rocks,

letting his bare toes lick into the sea.
Imagining what it means to drown

in the tub of his Adriatic again.
The same sea that twenty years ago my own mother

tiled to milk me.
How she crawled across that pinch

of a borderline. Swallowed her old country's thunderstorm,
emptied the sparks into water, watched them boil into a fetus.

The night sky: hairless and moonwild.
My mother gave birth to a scream

as wide as the moon.
You were born from catastrophe, my father tells me.

When you spilled out of her bank, I found a fish
hooked to your waist, called you a boy,

and named you after the word in Croatian for 'bay': *Luka*—
the shore's headwound; bludgeoner of sea.

The hordes of crickets outside moan silence into electricity.
The sound of waves drumrolling with the shore below

his family home. Sand splicing this city
from what once was: a people that lived like they

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drowned. I cuddle into the cool embrace of the AC
in my father's old bedroom. Let the sound of the fan

hum me to sleep. At night, I dream of my father.
His hair curling into fishhooks

in the saltwater. Floating still on his back.
A boy, my age. Baka tells me I look like my father.

But what does it mean to see myself sleeping in the sea?
My father once told me, his country wasn't always

this way. That the summers were sweet and dragged on
like a giggle. Where all the houses were built of marble

that looked like slices of white cake in the sun.
When I asked my father to sketch me a map

to my homeland, he simply put a finger to his lip,
took out a knife from the kitchen, sliced open his palm

from wedding ring to wrist.
When I was your age, he tells me. I saw a fighterplane overhead

cut open the sky with its wake. Only to see another one
the next day, stitch the sky back into blue.

This is your homeland, he says
staring down.

This is the place of your birth.
And I look down at the two ends of the wound

still trying to reach themselves—
to fix what they've left

open.