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Almost a Girl

John Beer

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John Beer

ALMOST A GIRL

appointed to ask
haphazard questions, rolling down the curb
like stray oranges, a delay
in the relentless march to full capacity.
Applause. This was once
what sleeping would have been, but I'm afraid
I am no longer able to bring you
into the cypress grove this year, or any year
to come. These ice cubes,
small and transient, are all that's left
of the enormous citadel they told you of
in grade school, gazing up at the map
of Pangaia, your little hand outstretched
for the bathroom pass. It is stubbornness
and graceful death we have to choose between:
no one said so, not in those words, and so it must
be true, although its truth will melt away
as the famous princess did, slowly dissolving
into her beautiful river. Already, in another
part of town, someone's connecting a hose
to the fountain, against which someone else's
bicycle leans.