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Two Poems on Pickerel Lake

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1. 1951

Five & I am buoyantly on my back while looking up under the girlish

under-skirts of willows leaning out over the shoreline as Mamma calls

from the safety of her screened-in cabin porch on the hillside, calling

for me to hurry in, can't I see how thunderclouds are moving in fast?

I splash in & run up the hill to her cold arms & a beach towel, shivering

in the sudden cool, uninvited breeze, looking back into the trees behind me,

their supple limbs bending, submitting.

2. 2001

A cool September evening & my boat

in perfect lullaby, gently rocking to the gibbous moonrise near the drop-

off where I fish alone for milk-eyed walleye down deep just beyond

94
stagnant algae & inside a rim
of coontail & green cabbage weed.

Drifting a jig-&-minnow, I wait for
the tap-tapping of a whiskered father

beneath me before setting the hook
& calling out to him to rise as I imagine

Lazarus once rose from the dead, Lazarus
who, at first, couldn’t believe his unimagined

fortune, the seemingly impossible just made
possible, a second chance, a miracle until

he noticed, as each star-struck fish I pull
from the depths notices, a barbed hook

far back & planted deep in his soft gullet.
In the moonlight, I watch nervous water-

striders, those Jesus-bugs, as they walk
on the water beyond the boat’s bow,

their spindly shrews’ legs skittishly
skating the lake’s surface under

the month’s full moon shining
down, a fuller moon shining up.