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Carve a Wooden Spool

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Imagine looking into the future, or the past, as if either were a dying sun. Out in the salt marsh imagine a torso by Phidias. Imagine Monet’s cathedral, Rouen at Dawn, floating face up in the Shetucket. Imagine a heron in polluted water, a root wad of lightning in the sky, the shadow of a bottle fly on a window tinted red. Smoke nests in the trees—or is that smog, low-down in the mud, where the river was? Imagine the eagle, its head and forked eye sculpted into the floor of an earth mound above the flood plain, beside the sacred fire. Imagine drum.

You say you pass too easily in and out of life and death—and you don’t much care which you inhabit. You say your own life is a sentence you cannot say. Your hands, trembling at your throat, taught you this. Imagine Moses the Panther, feral wooden haunches prowling through glitter as if glitter were power, raw. Its shooter-marble eyes don’t match—no way to think they could, or should. Even in the art museum, they’re wild.
Go deeper into the madness. Imagine
*Duck in High Fashion Stockings in the Snow.*

From O.L. Samuels, who carved them, learn
this charm—*Carve a wooden spool,*

his grandmother's refuge, her remedy
for the vertigo of *nothing-left-to-lose.* For an animal,

habitat is no longer given; for a human,
it has to be salvaged. Out in the salt marsh,

like an abandoned duck blind, imagine a marble head
wreathed in laurel. Imagine a rough-legged hawk.

*Wood,* now obsolete, once meant *insane.* Imagine

carving a wooden spool, looking
into the future, or the past, as if either were a dying sun.