

## “Alaskan Salmon”

How strange this menu ending with question marks, this open-ended slither of precipice and food and laundry list, every end enjambed, and so I reason, then, with this hypothetical on paper fare, whether *é* in *café* is taboo in the heartland, whether the “Alaskan Salmon” with capers and lemon wedges and surreptitiously thawed disjunctive on its journey through corn fields and presented now with the capers—actually—covering its eyes like it can hide that fact, like some ritualized send-off of antiquity, like keepsakes of dinners past stirring up some sort of Brutus conspiracy, if this death mask of salty buds not native to continental climates is simply too unnatural, too far from the city, eating then sacrilege, fish without any water, no graves in sight; I wonder if I would feel differently if I was on the coast, mainstreet not littered with parking tickets, whether the “Alaskan Salmon” even has eyes—dare I anthropomorphize—as I might imagine, as I project out a hideous friend—like-me understanding!—whether I would, instead, feel differently about looking such a massacre in the eyes, whether there’s something to be said about fish with human faces, how it might’ve—should I even ask—puckered when smoked ochre, a living thing turned fiery now gone cold over my death questioning, as I spin dad’s rubik’s cube of this-that prepositions, handed to me pink, ovid in a fleece of rice; maybe that’s why this whole thing is so uncomfortable, why I’m so meticulous about eating piece-meal, asking to and drawing attention, the questions—now posing—in the hand trap, fork to hand, as a child, as I finally take a bite—have I always eaten like this?—taking each thing apart and setting it down, sizing chunks, spectacularly aware of shape, weight, color, so it’s—I think it’s OCD—was told so by mom always remarking like a rush of pockmarks: go, go, go dinner is over and you’re still playing with your food—but maybe I just felt uneasy, about all of this—my place—the salmon’s—about the day they both moved out, how I went first to the foundation of the house, reshuffling each stone, peking grout, assembling an immovable force, whether this means something can

actually be unstoppable, or, the plate smelling more fishy than meaty, just another way to describe questions I can never have answered, like what this “Alaskan Salmon” might think, where its eyes are, had been—if they’re stolen—if I can bear to look at another duck pond disturbed in silence, a child tipping over a canoe, entropy brought back to zero, a spoiling figure, a parent, I assume, taking their son’s hand from the oar, holding him as still as an answer, and returning the lake to the most peaceful thing I could hope to pick apart, put together.