

FISH TALE

M. P. JONES IV

My brother died with a trunk full of fish

and beer bottles crashing together—
in the Mother's Day darkness—

I am endlessly returning

as if to a worn photograph,
a lure drifting along the lake's rim
in Vermont,
a place I've never seen, and so

can only imagine some dim shore growing certain
in torn threads of afternoon light.

I go back to those improbable stories

he would tell, eyes alight with the consuming
fire of beer and bourbon,

like the one where he is driving through the desert
all night,
just driving through the sand, until finally he stops
at noon—perhaps in Arizona,
perhaps nowhere at all—

on a waterless sea of solid glass,
supposedly the wake of some explosives test.

Walking over the burnt sand-lake's surface, breaking apart
frozen waves and currents
beneath his boots,
crumbling like a hopeless metaphor for certainty.

I listen as he wavers—wanting only to fix some narrative
over the near end—
recounting as his slurring sways,
circling to the moment just before the hooks are set,

before the surface quivers,
the bottles break,
and everything is finished.

And everything *is* finished:
the bottles break
before the surface quivers,

circling to the moment just before the hooks are set,
recounting as his slurring sways

over the near end,

I listen as he wavers, wanting only to fix some narrative.

Crumbling. Like some hopeless metaphor for certainty,
beneath his boots,
frozen waves and currents.

Walking over the burnt sand-lake's surface, breaking apart—
supposedly the wake of some explosives test—

on a waterless sea of solid glass.
Perhaps nowhere at all

at noon, perhaps in Arizona,
just driving through the sand, until finally he stops
all night.

Like the one where he is driving through the desert
fire of beer and bourbon.

He would tell, eyes alight with the consuming.

I go back to those improbable stories
in torn threads of afternoon light,

can only imagine some dim shore growing certain—
a place I've never seen—and so,

in Vermont,
a lure drifting along the lake's rim
as if to a worn photograph—
I am endlessly returning

in the Mother's Day darkness
and beer bottles crashing together.

My brother died with a trunk full of fish.