RIP

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RIP

Shaina Monet

Vassar Miller Poetry Award Honorable Mention

In the Haitian vodou tradition, it is believed by some that the souls of the newly dead slip into rivers and streams and remain there, under the water, for a year and a day. Then, lured by ritual prayer and song, the souls emerge from the water and the spirits are reborn. These reincarnated spirits go on to occupy trees, and, if you listen closely, you may hear their hushed whispers in the wind.

– Edwidge Danticat, “A Year and A Day”

Stacy knows the way things go around here like vapor, heavy, hard to see. they will extract their bodies, count from one to three

deduce the incident from the speedometer and brake. they will not correct the mistakes the newspaper article makes, or off

road next to the river tape the coroner’s report to a stake with flowers. for three hours her body bathes in water.

she’d lost her way back. in the passenger’s seat, the child bobbed, a crushed doll, while the metal clanks cooled in the flank. here, bodies will find her. Stacy hears them call. the car seat came down, undone, after all, turned her right side up, out of the water. they’ll linger here

touch. remove her daughter. tire the casing round the part made visible by the flood light, dragging the river’s mouth. to find her

follow the cricket’s sticky click. in the humid, thick Mississippi red earth, roof crumples like crepe paper. Stacy knows
the way things go around here & there will be none of that. after three hundred days she counts sixty-five more, takes a deep breath.

salt water rips her awake. some figure angels await. Stacy figures every day you die, every day you’d wake.