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The Wedding; Cracow

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The Wedding

In your best friend’s car with a borrowed ten dollars we eloped to Newport, singing over and over the trial by fire and water from The Magic Flute. My father cursed us over the phone and threatened to sit shiva for me as though I were dead. Your mother howled in the backyard, crying that you were still a child. My childhood lover pursued us with a gun. My mother forgave us. In the morning you sat writing a composition for your class, describing love and marriage in Latin, while I went in search of breakfast. The streets of Cambridge were glistening with our triumph, my heart ready to burst like a ripe peach with love and terror.
The wizened man in the Jerusalem market cried,
Don’t buy a dead fish, buy a live one!
*A lebedike: es schwimt, es shpringt, es tantzt!*
Flapping his arms to show how the live fish
swims, leaps, dances.
We laughed and said, yes, a live one.

He dipped his net into a tub
and brought out a sparkling bewhiskered old man,
flopping and gasping. It sprang to the floor,
unwilling to die.
Laughing, he held an ice cube
to the O of its mouth; then holding it down
on his cutting board,
he struck its head with a mallet
and cut it into steaks.

The fish was all bones, little meat,
flat and tasteless,
no matter how I cooked it.

Death, too, is a kind of resistance.