

JENN GIVHAN

Shooting Fish in a Barrel

I wish I'd written more poems about my babies being babies
when they were

I wish I'd eaten more chocolate, not just the good kind, but
the crummy Easter leftovers too, the Halloween chocolate
gummy at the bottom of the monstrous bag

I wish I hadn't split & kept splitting, a fish in a barrel, no, fish
parts, gutted, awaiting the chum

I think of shooting fish as shooting stars
A shyful a mouthful of squirming & scales

I would wish on them, all those bleeding fish
caught, quick-blown to the heads, then knifed
to break the gill rakes, held over boat bow & bleeding
into the waters that birthed them

Where my small babies have swum into bodies & voices & smells
I no longer recognize as anything other than *painful*, as in, *Young
adulthood was so goddamned painful*,

they reweave a shining trail in the water
& though I cannot eat chocolate or have babies or undo
the hurting done to me

I can watch the one closing her eyes at the end of my bed,
awaiting another day
She says, *Every time I open my eyes, you're there*,
& it's like I never drowned or died in the murky open,
never clamped my jaw onto a wire or pulled myself
into the boat

It's like I was born in that beautiful boat
It's like they were waiting for me to be born