

The Litter I See Project

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the ways i've been feeding it

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this past summer, a little high,
i plunged into the pacific. shoved
an empty bottle of lager, all

that was left in the fridge, under
my beach bag so, i wouldn't forget it

at the end of the day. the tide comes in
and swallows the beach. in the saltwater,

i float, gulping back the grief that still comes
unbidden. the pain of mother loss acts like sea suck.

the give and take, the mostly take. the ache pulled
through my throat each time i try to breathe past this loss.

a nudist, half-hidden behind a collection
of driftwood offers space. a kind of easy

companionship. neither of us asking anything
of the other. each of us ignoring what the other wants

to hide. his flesh. my guilt. an addiction squirming
below skin. and i'm trying not to drown in it.

no extraordinary measures

the thing is, after my mother's death
i drank myself tattered for a little while.
there is some measure of relief
in recognizing this. the way aching made
me ravenous. and now, the way I've begun
to think of grief as a sapling. the ways, i feed it.
i do not know if it was better to starve.

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Rayanne Haines (she/her) is the author of three poetry collections, the creator and host of the literary podcast *Crow Reads*, the President for the League of Canadian Poets and an Assistant Professor with MacEwan University. Her 2021 hybrid poetry collection, *Tell the Birds Your Body is Not a Gun* won the Stephan G. Stephansson Alberta Literary Award and was shortlisted for both the Robert Kroetch award and the ReLit Award. She's been published in the *Globe and Mail*, *Minola Review*, *Fiddlehead*, *Grain*, *Prairie Fire* and others. A CNF poetry and essay collection exploring grief after mother loss, identity, and gendered trauma is forthcoming from Frontenac House September 2024

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