When dawn broke and you rose from the slip slit silk of my legs, that oceanhome inside me, I felt I’d been right to leave my country of fish, of family, if only for this, for you, a birth emerging.

How surprised I was to see you finless, a girl of feet. Oh my leglimbed thing, how will you know me?

How will you remember what I miss: my brothers, the tinkle of seabels, whales wailing their prayer, coral as red as the canal you came from, my father’s stories, the thunder of space, knowing—we’re all just small things, swimming

The math is tricky.

\[
\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} = 2
\]

or

\[
\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} = -1
\]

Do you understand?

I named you Aurora for a reason, light that should not be. Am I not too a haunted anomaly, paradox of being? Exist with me, here, this murky land, this half-eaten we.

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Self-Portrait of My Mother as a Mermaid

Aurora Masum-Javed