

Raymond Luczak

The Orange-Haired Girl

Everyone keeps saying how beautiful Autumn looks
even though she's still struggling to smile in her bed.
After one false alarm of death after another,
the doctors keep changing her prognosis.
They marvel at the colors of her hair changing.

No one says anything about the red-orange strands
of her hair fallen to the floor in her hospital room.
Their feet rustle rattlesnakes among the crispy leaves
as they pretend she is still fire and glory.
Having your days numbered is punishment enough.

Soon there is no recourse but to pull the plug.
The ground, stiff with rage, splinters shovels.
Trees grieve into concentration camp survivors.
Stoic bitterness becomes an art form.
Tears hurt so much that even they seep into bone.

ISLAND BABY

Nails half-covered pearls.
Nose a tender snout, a fin.

Toes squiggly agates.
Head a smoothed coconut.

Arms luminescent sponges.
Hair a bare stream among reefs.

Eyes undulant octopuses.
Neck a tortoise's lengthening.

Legs dangling branches: here
the happiest dolphin will grow.