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## Bottom Feeders

Cheyenne Taylor

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*Cheyenne Taylor*

## Bottom Feeders

*“Everyone says he knows what a beetle is, only by  
looking at his beetle.”*

—LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

You say there is no pain for channel cats  
and show me how to pierce a chicken liver  
on a hook. I palm that dark slip, little clot  
impossibly animal, ready to bruise the river.  
The thrill is human: luring something other  
to the treeline, muscle sport. We haul in five  
before the evening sips the day’s last color—  
those swimming tongues go quiet in the light.  
You gut them on the tailgate, gills sucking  
nothing. If pain is a beetle, shut in a box  
of matches, what are grubworms? Just good bait.  
You toss the fresh-dressed cats into a bucket  
where they blink without their bodies at the shock  
of sky. Dusk gathers where we congregate.