

FISHING

Garland Strother

One day my sons, sure of its pleasure,
insist hard I take them fishing.
Backyard poles trimmed for leisure,
I drive out the parish highway wishing

I knew the bayou and its ways better,
how to fish its muddy waters right.
Trying to fit pointed hooks into bitter
worms, we push and open the light

skin of their earth-fed bodies, weight
the lines with sinkers shaped like beads
on rosary strings. Casting our bait,
we watch red floats settle in weeds

colonizing green water. Half an hour
later, the cord knotted like bad twine,
I jerk a one-pound catfish to shore,
breaking the pole in two. But the line

holds what we came for. I gut and scale
him like anyone new to the woods,
hoping that one fish and a shared tale
will last all of us two full childhoods.

(for Evan & Stuart)

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