

# Newtok, Alaska

Sasha West

I am telling you this because it is inside of my mind

The fish belly each other onto the shore

The water rises into the village and the fish diminish

The fish inside the diminishment The permafrost thaws

We know this is reported because it starts with a noun

A noun does something to another noun

The fish diminish in the river and the river spreads

Back when the fish swallowed the water, the banks were over  
there

Now the river flows across the floor of my home

*The river falls into smaller and smaller parts*

How the fish contained the river in their bellies while they  
swam through it

When we cooked them over the fire, the river would steam up  
to the sky from their bodies

How crowded on the shore as we sweep the walls and tin  
roofs of our shacks back

from the sea which has broken them down

With a broom I draw the fish from the river to tell the fish to  
return to the river

*The ground is slipping into the sea and the highways sink*

I was born in the middle of a river

The permafrost thaws under our feet and the feet of our dogs  
*and the fish spawn on the gravel beds*

My mind was born in the middle of a river

If I laid you down on the grassy patch my dogs' bodies  
melted at night in snow

If I gut the God from the fish in the river and put it in your  
hand

Could I trade back what has happened for something else?

The fish as one body of motion from here to the sea and  
terrifying

We are beside the river that has made of us a new thing

Let us pull the black nets across our bodies and eat the gravel

Let our bodies cool and still the water

