

Altar

In the water, my brother & I play

preacher: my right hand cupping

the nape of his neck

my left hand over his left hand pinching his nose

shut so as not to choke on

the tadpoles.

He anticipates a shifting

even with our feet stuck

sturdy in the creek's bed

& my knees tight like burl on an oak tree

& my grip burning temporary red

freckles into his neck.

I raise my finger tips to the sky

in preparation for

the blessing

& he says *sissy, please don't*

*let me*

*drown*