

SALMACIS

BECOMING NOT QUITE A WOMAN

salmacis

becoming not quite a woman

ELIZABETH TRAIN-BROWN



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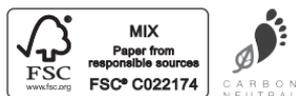
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SALMACIS

BECOMING NOT QUITE A WOMAN

*The key to success is to question your gender three times before
breakfast and throw yourself at water nymphs.*

the serpent had nothing
to do with it

i bit deep
into the forbidden fruit
clutched it to the hollow of my chest
folded myself into the floor
and

howled

screamed my lungs raw and burning
shattered my teeth
tore apart eden
trying to fill this ache behind my womb
that tasted divinity
and was still broken

as told in hair

i was born in a tangle
of blood and cord and hair
screaming

i knotted myself
in my mother's purple-dyed mane
clutched the strands behind her ears

and i was reborn in hair
when it clumped with blood
sticky
between legs that had never been hairy
till now

i lived
breathing the air through a fringe
down to my chin, air
like the dust from moths' wings
like the sooty cross on the brow
of children

then
i shaved my head

you can't part the tide
of someone's hair
if it's not there

can't run it through your fingers
can't pull me heavenwards

men might lick their thumbs
and wipe away my name
but i'll rewrite it

i grew
i hid dye in the showers
painted my hair in the sink
left strands of blue between pages
of books

i told children what vegetables
turn hair orange pink green
i'll tell you too
i'll help you plait your hair
with glitter and pine cones
if you ask

but mostly
i'll show you how to wrap it
around yourself
and disappear

AS TOLD IN HAIR

so that when i'm old
my hair will grow silver
so thick and untamed
that after my mother dies
no one will ever see my eyes again

about the poet

ELIZABETH TRAIN-BROWN is a poet and writer whose work has been published internationally in various anthologies and journals. Their journalism on discrimination, asexuality, transgender issues and polyamory has also received widespread recognition. Outside of writing, Elizabeth follows in her parents' footsteps as a circus performer and fortune teller. *Salmacis* is their first collection.

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