Makayla

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Makayla

By Shawn Fawson


A five-year-old girl has been drawn a bath and asked to sit, fixed and wary, having just stepped in a tub filled with red-brown water and coal sludge.

Flat suds: a mountain-top blown to pieces and going up in blasts outside. Grey smoke scribbles its dust over roofs, swings, cans, dolls, and whatever else a house still holds.

Someone’s washed her hair, but she’s hardly a little girl, looking down as if the truth might reveal itself in stages: this is still her home, her house found only by tearing up the map, her town without paved streets, well with no clean water trickling through stone. Here, the seepage of metallic runoff fills a tub where a child bathes, hunched down and scared; her small hands, clasped together, claim the one thing she knows.