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Gratitude

Because you said things that kept me
floating on my too-small kayak in the dark
mangrove tunnels, the greasy mud
waiting underneath and underneath that
the closed boxes with all my faces
inside; because you kept holding out
gifts to me though we both knew
I could not reach them yet;
because whatever the distance you still
answered the clotted, shapeless
sounds coming from my throat
and told me to keep making them

I want to send all my good
molecules over to you, embrace
until our spines touch—hell, I want
to thank you so hard
I become you and you
me for just long enough that you see
yourself with all the leaves
budding beautiful from your
long limbs and maybe I'll
see that creature lying balled up

in the crushed undergrowth
as something worth saving.

Katherine Riegel
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Katherine Riegel is the author of two books of poetry, *What the Mouth Was Made For* and *Castaway*. Her poems and essays have appeared in a variety of journals, including *Brevity*, *Crazyhorse*, and the *Rumpus*. She is co-founder and poetry editor for *Sweet: A Literary Confection*. Visit her at katherineriegel.com.