

BRENDAN SHAY BASHAM

Do Not Drink from the Tailing Pond

stir together leetso
the duck in her grease bath
bathe her delicate saunter

tomorrow, she'll wish
for the arms of juniper
to pull piñons
from the mouths of children

squeeze a sneeze from the throat of a child
too broken to breathe on her own

a clot like a clogged dam
released to river where
nothing grows like it used to

2021
JAMES
WELCH
PRIZE

WINNERS

selected by Sherwin Bitsui

Art by Stella Nall

KENZIE ALLEN

Oskanu-tú

*“they tell me the word carries with it
the meaning of ‘peace’
and you cannot pull those things apart
or sift out the animal from the state
of being or vice versa,”
lit. “deer”*

For a few more moments, it is ours.

You are not that kind of wolf who would devour the world.
I no longer return to the forest alone.

No-face doll, water lily—

I look for myself in every lake mirror,
suspended in briar,
the tilted back throat and howl.

In the overgrown, river-dappled,
I don't know what it looks like,
peace, I say, except
for the outline of where it's been.

I feed her peaches. She licks my fingers
almost clean. Velveteen

of newly grown, the strawberry
trail into cinder cone

I made my haunt, a thicket
clover-charmed. An island
where we all are well fed
a roadside warning. Soft supple

meat. We never can go back
to listen for the soundless. My stomach
ripe for arrow and
so unsettled. We would be better

fur-lined, to slip through snow
smoothly, if headed
in the right direction.

If I could become it, quivered
skin fit to leave my bones

past,
gaze tied
to the hunter, headlights,
this body I can't bear

into exile,
that time of year our antlers shed.

