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VERSE IN PLACE

PETER MARKUS

Almost Human

In my other lives I must have been a fish,
a bird, a tree, a stone, a river, or maybe
just a drop of water that is a small part
of a river. Why do we love what we love?
We see ourselves when a fish rises up
to break water or when a bird takes flight
or a tree in its many arms holds the sky.
The stone we pick up off the ground wants
to be held which makes it almost human.
The fish and birds, the trees and the river,
only want to be left alone. They pity us
our desire to be something that we aren't.

*"Almost Human" from *When Our Fathers Return to Us as Birds*, published 2021 by Wayne State University Press
(<https://www.wsupress.wayne.edu/books/detail/when-our-fathers-return-us-birds>). Used by permission of the author.*

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VERSE IN PLACE

PETER MARKUS lives in Michigan. His latest book is titled *When Our Fathers Return to Us as Birds*, a collection of poems about loss, grief, and the solace that can be found in the natural world. He is also the author of several books of fiction, among them *Bob, or Man on Boat* (a novel) and *We Make Mud* (a collection of short fiction). He teaches at Oakland University and is the Senior Writer with InsideOut Literary Arts, a non-profit arts organization based in Detroit.



COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR