

*Negesti Kaudo*

# **The One Where My Femme Swallows You Whole**

We both know the water has never been your friend, & so the flood was always predestined to be your nemesis. & we both know that you could never know when I would finally come—when the twenty percent chance of rain would turn out to be a flash flood, when the tropical storm stewing on the coast for days would morph into a category three or five—& you can't stop me from my destination. Don't take it personally. Eighty-seven percent of everything on my way to you will be destroyed along with you: the trees will be ripped from the ground & tossed like lint from my shoulder, roof tiles will scatter in the wind, animals will flee or be swept with the current, & oh, the water—how it will rise like nothing ever seen before & at first, you will think it's God, but that is not my name. I fill your mouth by slinking through the gaps of your teeth, lubricating your throat as I trespass into your trachea with brute force, making my way into your lungs. Consumption is my obsession. You become what you desire, so the only thing I know to do is devour. I will be quick, I promise. The only trace of me will be inside you, claiming your body & spirit as mine. Afterwards, people will silently trek through the waterlogged ground in awe of what was strong enough to remain standing & everything else that was decimated in my path.

Negesti Kaudo is an essayist and educator from Columbus, OH. She's the youngest recipient of the Ohioana Library Association's Walter Rumsey Marvin Grant (2015) and an alumna of the Ragdale Residency and Winter Tangerine Workshop. Her works exist in *Best American Experimental 2020*, *Seneca Review*, *Wear Your Voice Magazine*, *Fourth Genre*, *The Normal School*, and elsewhere. Visit [kaudonegesti.squarespace.com](http://kaudonegesti.squarespace.com) and insta [@negestikaudo](https://www.instagram.com/negestikaudo).