

Leech

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Dormant Water

Days I licked honey from the palm
of my own hand, when summer

tattooed falling runes
in dark red on my legs,

as I dashed through.
Never then

did I wonder
what it meant to trail

ropes of bog with me,
fighting toward the kayak,

how it only grew
stronger as I swam.

Or ask my father
about sickness borne

through dormant water.
Or ask my mother why

her hands wept through the lilacs
as she patted them flat in the dirt.

Rather, I asked my grandmother
for another piece of jewelry

from her cabinet, pieces
I hid away like the chickadee

my heart was,
small and curious,

constellating bright crumbs
for hungry days ahead.

Boreal (loon)

The loon dives and surfaces singing,
filling rock shores
with songs found underwater.

I roll a juniper berry over my tongue,
its blue-spice bark, the sun uncupped
and escaping through pines.

We could fall to the lake.
When the night sky is in cloth,
and conifers button up with chill.

Mouth to mouth, we could meet
treading water. Then back on the dock,
tight in our nakedness, shivering winds.

Even the stars are belted in.
On certain human nights we're awake,
wet hair wrapped in flannel, fire
licking up the iron stove.

Rain will come today
I tell you, back in bed with the coffee,
smelling the woods in your skin
and the foraged home of your hair.

Rain comes, knocking holes
in the water where the tremolo
of the loon still sounds.

Oh is it wrong
to be so unbound.

Hallow

Moonset over seventh street. A creamless car
glides into existence through clouds of steam
where someone showers carefully in the dark.

The composer in my ears presses black key after black key.
Houses in rows like corn and climber beans.

If the dead were ever to rise, they would
on a scene like this, to lean against the porches
take a little burned coffee
and go back to sleep.

The wind comes through
reciting German
wie im Himmel
so auf Erden. For this sickness of waking
and crying before morning. For the frosts

spiraling through darkness, splitting our blood in
mosaic, warping the street like a billowed sheet.

Oh *Geheiligt* be the wood splintering in my rails.
Geheiligt the night nesting down.

Dornröschen

Sudden trees surround us while we sleep.

Waking forever dark,
driving to work under varying chips
of moon. It's always okay
my love, it's my imagination
and I, bunking up for winter,

the kind of winter people slip on and just lie
where they fall. I've read all the fairytales we had,
started dreaming in fairytale—

I'm at the ball, shoes of shattered glass, my compact
mirror trained on everyone's grim heart.

I'm getting briarcut up, lost
in the forest, food for the forest,
fire for the forest.

The winter everyone got buried
and watched their bodies
drive off to work,

I dreamt burglars broke in,
shredded our animals around the room
in summer clouds.

The winter I started wearing makeup,
rubbing it over my cheeks,
that eye area that tells it all to everyone.

Nothing says health like a flush,
nothing says blush
like blood, nothing is cosmetically available
to make it look like a girl's behind her iris.

Icicles rake out like briars
shaping a ribcage around our house.
Ripe eyes bloom wide in the thicket.

Rusalka

When the boat hit, we were tinfoil crumpled
in a fist, great percussion instruments—
followed by a quiet
you could steep your tea in.

Then, I opened, saw my new skin,
the color of juniper.

Past days smeared together, left a mess
of fingerprints on every thought I hoped
to preserve for the afterlife.

What eyes the water gives. I opened them
wider and wider, until the trees on the shore

were my lashes, the lake my retina. Now
I see what we called time, frameworked

in space. Now lines from every shooting star
fall together, runes thrown into the bowl of the world.

Maybe we were onto something
to fly through wet darkness,

voids of long blackberry beneath us.
Maybe we were offering our dumbfish brains

to the summoning loon, her voidsilk voice
that threw nets all night, for a lake
quaking with hunger,
thus I became.

Oneirocritica

*But our task is to die,
to die making roads,
roads over the sea.
-Antonio Machado*

I dreamed of my hands, buried in oranges
and pecans that glowed like jewels.

One poet writes, coffee and blue jays
by morning. Another weeps, returns
the pencil to its cup.

We wanted to get under the floor
of this life, spells over water,
the lover's trick of licking
every memory to silk.

We went tapping, thirsty
through the forest, found bees
spinning sugar inside a skull.

There are secrets in that honey
to unbraided you, yarn by yarn.
There are secrets that crack the soul
straight through.

A poet walks to ocean's edge
and goes on walking. Ask us,
at what moment even frailty
falls apart.

Story Time with Peter Pan

He woke everyday beside me, foal
on shabby legs, trying his strength
in the forest of constant morning.

He forgot who I was.
I started telling him
the same story every night. Cinderella
turns into a pumpkin for staying in the arms
of her prince when she was supposed to go home.

Cinderella thought, worst-case
scenario, she'd revert to waitress clothes,
thought she'd fly all night, Luna moth
to his light, and land in a new reality.

He woke always the same, until I despised
the innocent *joie de vivre* that made me agree
to run away and never grow old with him.

I told him Cinderella went for some whiskey
and just turned into a pumpkin! And the prince
found no trace of her and so forgot her,
and the castle had pumpkin pie for desert, the end.
Oh by this time, Peter is asleep.

Gretel at the Frog Pond

In the thickness, am I. Hair like dead cattail stalks,
though I've tried to tend myself, though evenings find me

with tangles torn out, licorice limmed, shiny as a cranberry.
Frog, I might've learned my lesson with candy,

houses that hunger for the hungry, yet now there's nightly cocktail
parties, languages we speak and have sickened on.

And all the old places are sick of me, Frog, I need a stronger drink.
Spike it some chlorophyta algae. I've brought my own glass. Thanks,

I'll likely want another, but tell me what it's like to smell storms
as men smell bread, thunder crust rising and browning, saltflash

of lightning. This must be heaven to you Frog,
your skin is luminescent. How about something illegal,

did you hear fines for harvesting water lily are up a hundred?
It's this dammed economy, this drought of green honey,

that's one reason I come here, Frog, you don't charge a poor girl
anything. You don't know how attractive generosity is as a quality,

so many people seem to offer a kindness
while they're firing up their ovens, but forgive me, that was fishing

for sympathy I don't need to fish for.
You wouldn't do this, if you didn't on some level, love—

not that I'm putting words in your mouth, Frog, only that
this storm is whipping the clouds to cream, and near you
I believe in reams and reams of rain.

Boreal (glyph)

We all woke cold,
the border wilderness. A rain
drilled holes through balsam, black
larch, to lakes held crystal
in every rock. Lightning kept us
visible, burying into ourselves,
and the old green tent,
always thought it significant
that a friend is better for warmth
than clothes. The sealed plastic bag
of books got left behind in a living room—
but one handwritten page
soaked in our canoe, weather
scrawling glyphs in its margin.

5am the rain moved over, branch-break
and a once oiled sky, smeared around.
The drying page
now reads...circles cores expand

Hours after one of us woke the fire,
found myself leaden in a heap of dirty hair,
murk half-moons under nail and eye. Re-read
the storm's page with char-printed fingers. *how?*
we wrote back,
and sent the paper off in smoke.
That day a hundred eyes fell
on our camp, our graceless but grateful movements,
coffee set to boil while sap in the heating pines
ran fragrant and fast.

Lantern

The sky of October thins to lantern
paper. Like my grandmother, her life here

before she moved to Florida with her clay and pastels.
Where she walks her dogs through salted night, dreaming
of snails melting out of their shells.

Of the street painted in tiger lily, where cars
roll like horsehair drawn across a cello.

When sickness came again, she woke
at treacherous hours to mix paint. And we
watched her skin wane translucent,
divulge the color of each secret organ.

I could die where the tiger lily dies. Petals frozen
in a wrinkly kiss. I want the tomato of my womb
to be the last thing swelling, beating red.

Now all that is written in her body
becomes legible
held up to some great light.

Pictures from the Floating World

I.

On the St. Petersburg bench, an elderly man
and woman wake. I watch a stranger approach,
leave them a cup of coffee. They share it, sipping
by turns, each breath rising up.

II.

Rome swallows copper ale. Smell basil,
urine, car oil parted for a spring draft.
A tumbler later and the city is burning.
In Circus Maximus, cherry buds break
on their branches, thin tongues sliding out.

III.

Kolkata, I walk buckling streets
with candy in my pocket. Cherry pity for the kids
playing after foreign money. One boy
takes it far, drops to his knees, grabs my feet,
pressing down his face. And I know the joke,
lift him by the arm while he laughs.

But that night when I wash my feet,
still see the half-moon of his forehead,
handprint minor stars.

IV.

Yangon's rain is my clothing. I have taken
both churches and temples for refuge, rubbed
my fingers into the language of circles.
Circles like bicycles in the flooded road.
Like bowls of soup, meals I skipped
when money ran out. Hollowed like a flute.

And when I counted out my last *kyat*, the boy
serving in the tea house refused it, gave me

sweet rolls sprinkled with sesame.
On the last day his letter read,

*please write some lines for me
that I would never forget in my life.*

V.

Gulf of Thailand like chamomile
at this late hour. I've got a heart of busted
coconut, a splinter husk scratching my interior.
And it floats, hauls my chest
to surface, broken in the two halves
of my breasts. This meat I offer.

Saung May Win, Myanmar

When it rains, her mother relives the terrible
storm of a year prior. Nargis—the cyclonic daffodil.
The village tastes its salt in the grain
of their buried homes.

Saung. The first syllable is a harp of traditional music.
She's seen four seasons of monsoon and the brim
of eyes is her happy secret. Knowing, but never afraid.

She was born on the day of the mouse that runs
through the treetops. Temple, with her mother
who cannot ignore the gods after the sea flower
stole the children of the southern coast.

At home, where her mother stirs oil and rice, where
the weather is her only teacher.

When it rains, the water draws around her
hips, *Saung May Win, this is a circle.*

She rests her finger on the surface of the flood
recites with childish lilt,
Water, this is a line.

The Motorcyclist

Yangon drops behind teak woods of stillness. Revving
up to pass monks in the bed of a truck. Their robes billowing back
in beetle nut color.

In Bago, he earns his tea by photographing children,
pinning Polaroids to a bamboo wall. The images wave into
smoke, wander through the realm
of hungry ghosts and arrive paralyzed

until rain hits. Mother pours sweet clay-color into his cup, eyes
of monsoon. Her kids outside where a river rises through the road,

and he remembers his girlfriend in Hat Yai. The rain like this
over their heads on Ko Samet. Love webbed in spider thread
on her thighs.

The motorcycle pelts through rain. Gooseflesh knitting over
his forearms. He prays to the fig tree,

All reverence isn't enough to wrap your roots
round my heart. Sky falling over my bike buries
me soon. I hope for more next time, O unconscious cycle.

Since I am a hungry ghost in the body of a man. A cicada song
crushed into form, done an insect penance. I hope
for better next time.

Emily After Dark

The brain is wilder than a sky
afflicted with many weathers—

Even the sun whirls like a top
at the Pole—Even constellations spin
in a compass

You are the point I approach
where needles go Berserk! God, I've been looking up

Orion frantic, Cassiopeia catching
on the veins of a sagging sky

I've been stepping forward
pen like a knife in an open hand
paper chest bared to the blade—

Burning out the buckthorn
that built my cabin—
untwirling nuts and bolts
in a caterpillar craze

God, I've been diving in the lake at night,
magnetite—calling the iron back out of my blood.

Even Death can be adjusted
from the right angle—

Even the stars can be tightened down
like screws—

Even the magnet pull in my brain—
Tell me which way to turn

Wilderswil

Alpen lodge built collapsing
doubt whistling
in the edges
I tried to run but was
caught each night
by stars over Wilderswil

who gave me apple cakes to eat
who gave me chocolate
melted with mercury who
taught me to trust thinning floors
of abandoned houses like nothing
would ever crack beneath us
swallow us in an intake
of breath

like a mouse I found my way
through upper floors
found a boy to lie with there
to knot my hair around his fingers
lodged in an open throat
of wind gasping like all
was fucked from the beginning
something off in the stars
who saw everything over Wilderswil
who took us down the avalanche trail
ensuring our lives from
towns set like traps beneath us

I hoped it was benevolence
in the snow that hadn't
swallowed me yet I hoped
doubt blew in to keep me awake
where frost finds all who fall asleep
I married that boy who is knotting
my hair into a net beneath us beneath us

Boreal (spider)

A path beads up the light, my
rosary between dock-ladder rungs.

I pulled a blue note flat from water,
one framed pane of lake.

Three little girls noted my knitting-needle legs,
my body's blood-yarn, fairer than their wormsilk hair.
I'm fast enough to forget each lace

when they twirl it up with a stick and cast it
through the water.
I never meant those prayers to last.

Didn't want old winds in my net, polka-dotted
with hollowed mayflies.
I wanted a job to do every night, to sing
by silence and spruce needle,

to be stung by morning, at the center of my soul
written-out and trembling.

Gretel Takes a Job, Canby Raspberry Farm

Bruise from rain and rainbalm for the bruise. Bathe me
Sherwood, bright black, greenbath for the jays, bumblebees

under hay, hayhome and honeycomb watered down,
sugarmud for proboscis, for a world that needs some sweetening,

dirtworth and rich earth and an Earl Grey morning,
clouds of milk, morning silk down from sky

in wet reams—wheat daydreams a coup from the raspberries,
and all they look like Christ with their thorns and bloodseeds,

till the golden field is purple scars under burnt stars, smelling
bread and jam, grounds for going the way of wheat, golden

kernel choked down by thorns, raspberry born—Canby dangerous
for birds picking seeds on the path, Canby raspberry words,

we took it up from prarieland, honey, flour—butter on the tongue,
salty savor of a life well-rubbed into the corners of a pan, Minnesota

farmhand, prairie-brown arm, bake me thunderscones, batterband
in a bowl, hot ovenhole for cake, keeping safe with my orchard-county

friend, her flickering strawberry head,
apples she'll bring, green or red when the rain ends.

Swede Hollow

The prairie falls,
shawl around while I sweep
autumn from the cafe' door.
On the other side of the glass
they're having coffee with apple tart.

Fairest of things,
look to us this winter, steam rising
from cars, houses of laundry,

a last cloud of November
broken into snow against the oat field.

I wanted the sky tucked over me like gardener's burlap,
to be uprooted like a radish into the next world.

That field where I blessed frost on this city,
thinking it was all mine,

the grit and the light were mine
the people and their hats were mine
the coneflower stalks, the chipping shutters,
the cake crumbling in their mouths,

mine. I once thought nothing
could move me to give it back.

45. God, someone kept saying,
God, God.

Her legs sewn with crimson thread.
 blur my prayer,
 (blur ever over my

51. Boys flay
durian meat for market, and there are cups
 of ground sugarcane
 at lunch, heaps of sweet mulch.

56. The voice of God
 was saying
 responsibility toward
the earth and humankind,
 and we had thanaka paste on our cheeks,
malachite on our necks.

63. Remember the hut in the groundnut field? There was a bayan tree nearby.

And one white Zebu,

 and a child's shirt drying from the thatch.

69.
Remember the men reading newspapers by rainlight, remember
students sitting on white, wet tile, remember
the old woman stringing jasmine on your neck,
 Zahra,
 remember bowing your head to receive it?

Still Life. I-94

At six in the morning
deciduous trees fade along
their branching,
edges blurred into white,
soft hair. A few semi-trucks
gather substance,
fall back into absolution.

The smell of ginger tea lifts from the travel mug,

frost prairie fields and farms pass through glass,
every black leaf crystallized where it fell,
and Pelagius must have been right about original sin,

we were born
innocent as a bowl of peaches.

First sun in this fog makes the color of lost peaches,
and November is forgiven for an hour.

Earth's nervous system
in the webbed roots of hickory, ash and maple

linking up, seismograph
readings on the state of things,

their question unanswered: could we not
have stayed that way?

Pictures from the Frozen World

The old men wander St. Paul, near the river
or the cathedral, soft wrinkling necks
wound in wool.

You watch as winter
rubs out the streets and traffic,
leaving shavings on your hair.

The sky will fall all night,
over black-capped chickadees snug
in their spruces, and an ivory-upholstered sofa
pushed to the middle of the frozen pond.

You step outside your apartment—
forget for a breath, even your body.

Imagine falling prone
on the sidewalk—so cold
it's busting up, only to draw
a mitted and generous hand
near.

At the holiday's foyer, they've set a drink
in your hands. O gentle trumpet in the scotch,
white fireplace ghosts, gnawing at the rooftop.

Masked men with shovels follow
dotted tire-lines to a ditch,
where someone's heart
beats hazard-light bright.

The frozen Minnehaha Falls as
baleen bristles in a gloom-blue mouth.

Our dead draw fingers
through the powder, wild cursive
in the lamp of the headlights, all warnings—
we drive slow, know
their hands
could flip us over.

Lausanne

But each night prayers for help addressed to something
different. To God, the chilly bed sheet, the snow.

Skin forms on the sky anywhere I go. What use is Paris, Edinburgh
with its castles from coloring books, dark lines and an emptiness

I am weary of filling. But vineyards stand,
holding hands against a tyranny of snow.

We too could be drinking outside the station, we too
could have some heat, however brief

but the street would remain unbending
as this air, heedless and fat with snow.

I'm sorry to be in this place like a splinter in the palm,
when I might as well forget and have some gin with you.

Everything I said, going soft as it's lost in the snow.

Gretel and the Snow

First it's marshmallows,
all *baby it's cold outside* and warm hands
of the lover on your spine.
While any fool could see the trees
turning to spindle point.

Yes, every home is growing teeth—
but there's the lover again, freckles
in auspicious constellation
across his shoulders, a gift from his mother,

like the one your mother tried
to keep from you, the winters with her babies
safe at home while she drove,
what came to shape in the headlight snow,
blurry trail of crumbs, how she toyed
with letting the steering wheel go.

Now the lover is drawing the poison out
with his mouth.
Now the stars on his body map
a path back home.

Now Gretel, there are crumbs on the floor,
are you some child so starved for *Kekse*,
she crumples more than she consumes?
Have you spent your night in the drifts
dreaming frosting, is your brain
frostbitten to bits? Voice hoarsed
to nothing in the ergosphere? Voice licked
to salt on the road?

Rusalka

Her tongue of champagne over his,
went on drinking, fishing tackle forgotten
on the moss. When he started to drown, he pulled
back, for one last look on her curved darkness
with a mirror surface. Golden pyrite eyes,
scales of fletched little minnows swimming
in her chest. For the way her cheeks absorbed
the dawn color of his blood, water bugs
skating her hair in note
following note, melody he fed.

Boreal (tick)

I begin with the sun
how it's melting through the pan
flat sky, a spreading oil on the lake.
You stop me there

for dinner, the smell of walleye
hissing, circles of meat from the cheeks,
frying up gold, till fork after fork.

We go for an evening dip,
shampoo our hair, drink
the magnet-colored water for luck,
to hold a bit of the dark
while it swims over Canada.

There's no narcotic, no coffee
to keep awake, no liquor
but the lake, the lake.

Our pupils all widening black seed,
ants at the picnic crawling in
and out of me. Ticks are the cost
of love in tall weeds—I pay it
exactly, build the fire from hair
and sticks. Let it float the woods over,
comb tangles from the spruce.

Let rust cover the canoe we pushed
through dark aisles of water lily, how we
would tip the water up, kiss the cold blush.

I lay quiet as a sky. Fire snaps
at sap on this great rock, gilded
in lichen, while night is gilding you and I.

Oneirocritica

I shook the punctuation marks out of my poem
and planted them near the garlic in my garden
where commas grew into questions and question marks
grew into giant briar weeds where I built myself a home.

Madame, I would love to see you get through to me.
These thickets'll do a number on your clothes.
I have sonnets I broke into spaghetti, sauced
in tomatoes folks like you have thrown. I have

haikus I set loose, making love in birch trees. Madame,
my Midwestern pronunciations of *root* and *sure*.
You've never seen me at a cocktail party, but the drinks
I order are real cheap drinks, and the doctor says I'm deaf

to flattery. I'm too short for my width, and I wouldn't change it.
I'm stronger than I am sexy, spend my money on tools and critters
and tea accessories. I still pray, still sing. My castles in the sky
are substantial enough to make it rain.

When I plant an exclamation mark, a beanstalk rises up.
You've been the giant waiting on top, but I am a harp
that needs no hands.

Swede Hollow

With lines from James Wright

Those days of rain,
I'd be on break in the courtyard, absorbing
every color of bramble rose, coffee grounds worked into the garden,
steaming yet a little. The bus-boy, watching his feet
over a tub of clanking dishes, sparing the daisies
that have leaned into the path. All we want
is with us in the morning. Crawling mint ties up the ground
we set aside for sorrow. Our cellar, speckled with leaves
fallen from celery. The cook rises from that warren
every so often, the thick muscle in her arms against a crate
of lettuce heads, or blackberries, or eggs and milk cartons—
it's different every time. Her name is Shirley. I owe her
entire quiches, caramel rolls, empanadas, enough
bread pudding for Christmas morning.
She has the perfect streak of flour in her black hair, flawless
shine of butter on generous hands. Ode to her, to the dish-pit
steam on chilly days, gloves tearing on tins. And the clumsy
washing of knives at dawn when we're slammed somehow,
my mind flat, serene as fog—
while I recite, starting again when I'm interrupted.
Hands dusty with espresso, tamp down *Number One*,
I slouch in bed. Beyond the streaked trees of my window,
keeping a cyclone with the frothing wand,
all groves are bare. I go slowly, because the end of the poem
is the best part. I want to think of it when Shirley is pouring
cream, when the bus-boy starts singing in the back, when our people
have moved on, and sparrows pick crumbs from their tables,
and I can't doubt the solidity of that branch.

Beach Grass

A pelican lay in the grass, each feather
awake, swaying in the streaked green and straw

of life and almost-life. Is it tragedy that beach grass
and sea bend only so close then back again? Or the wind

combing me into all 360 degrees,
my mind slipping away

along each strand, tent caterpillars pulled
and falling endlessly. As if

I was quiet but alive in my own way, before thought
arrived, blown back again

to God waiting with the broken pelican. Waiting
for a tide to smooth back all the crumpled feathers.

Cover me to sleep,
lay the plane of your hand over my tangled head

and tuck me in, pressed down like dirt
around a last, living seed.

Wade me out, cold as I can stand
through the symbol I've made of the sea.

Oneirocritica

The bear of masculine antagonism
is smearing through children like peanut butter
when I go lucid, barrage a closet with my handfuls
of children. Is this making sense?

A sorcerer pouring tea says, I am not here
of your fear, but capacity for audacious power.

The teacup at least refers to a kitchen, the
heart of the psyche in a dreamscape, where
the garbage disposal is out and tearing up the floor. A shame
the heart of the mind is so threatening.

A dream catcher hung too high in the window
must have been how a shout slipped out.

When you dreamed you were naked, pitching grenades
into diamond shop windows, sorting gems from the scattered glass
when it was all just scattered glass.

Rusalka

The lake I once took to my chest
became a fog I walk through, barefoot

and naked in the bottom of the rock basin
where the water is quieter than snow.

Fishermen, boat riders,
blueberry farmers, I find you

when you're lonely, when you wander
from your homes, swollen-eyed as baitfish.

You've forgotten the taste of the water.
Let me lead you to pearling stars
crusted on the night floor.

Let me slit your eyes that never
close, that see through kimberlite and bone,
let me weave you under walleye chop

to where storms beat slow. Let me
suck your currents of warmth, envelop them
with my body long as insomnia, body going on
as far as ripples go.

Boreal (a history)

You watch from the dock where spider floss
from your hair binds you to the wind. What a home

you have made of yourself. I see now,
how our lives began. Some dawn light

poured into water, driven through raspberry,
sap through spruce.

Back when I raced over moss with my sisters,
as young as our faith in the creatures of the wood.

Red fox of survival, wolf spider
home-provider.

Carefully the water turned pages at rock's edge.
And the evening brought us its heart

in its hands, circle of moon, pearl
to hang on the aurora's neck.

I saw lights fall, blue flame combing
tangles of wind and green water from my hair.

Let me wade into this icy lake.
Let me, a sky unbleached.

Gretel on a Walk

The truth of the raspberries in their scratch
not their sugar, wading deep into the arches.

Appeared to be tracing canter-leaps of the grasshopper,
berries bruising purple, miniscule honeycombs, she ate

them in handfuls, so hot from July they fell into jam.,
loving their snatch at her clothes,

though they invaded her nightmares each winter, spider legs
coated with barbs, but now even their spikes

were felting green twirls, leaves in three hands, palms
to the uplifted sun. Their thousand fingers caught her hair

and wove themselves in, scrawled scriptures into her skin
in light stings, in bloodlines so thin, they would heal by morning.

Bowstring Weed

North farther. Northern Father tastes his children in the water,
leech and muskee part his hair, what you might meet out here,
lurking through the roots of the muskeg, asleep in the basin rock.
How you love it—and it's dangerous—gluts itself with us. Dawn,
the drawn bowstring weed, lilyheart won't protect your breast when
mosquitoes ask their tax of night, when the loon flute opens your afterlife.

Boreal (physic)

Was a fern unfurling
in the brightgreen water.
Dreaming dark mermaids
and cold, quick teeth.

In the company
of little moose drowned
in the muskegs,
leeches and their secret
craft of young—two slender strings,
slow, twirling hungers
layers under light.

A moss clearing in a birch grove
where as a child, I built a table
from decay-deep branches and slept.
Where I still come
in the evening, though I've since
learned fear of black bears
and hatred of horseflies,
to lie on my stomach,
and suck water from the moss.

There are great blue herons
long dead in the deep.

There are ashes from the family
salting it down.

Thirsts, I take them up in my mouth,
I swallow.

At 2am the Moon

is sinking through
a lake where I'm

empty space swimming

shore and forest blurring. My nakedness
cupped in endless ink.

Once the heart was important, but now

it's the eyes
opening and closing, mesmerized
by an unblinking iris in the navel of the night.

Warden, watchlight trained on a fugitive
swimmer, insomniac, forgetter.

Remembering the beat
of water, pulse around

all the items I dropped
through silky
black, to slip forever away

key
fish

finger

As I also have slipped,

a bee clutched in black nectar, eyelash in the onyx eye

of the lake drilling itself
down to mad center until

only the moon remains above water

its pardon
in the shape of a puncture.