

# **PROMISCUOUS RUIN**

**JULIAN MITHRA**

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**Julian Mithra**

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## CONTENTS

His Daring Woodcraft	3
Jack-light	5
Bruised by Recoil	7
Baker Rifle, standard issue	9
Every Building Is A Grave (I)	12
How to Gralloch	13
The Curse	15
How to Spin Wool	17
The Cumberland's Revenge	18
Aubade for Lem	20
The Deer God	22
Beaut'	23
Every Building Is A Grave (II)	25
Way Finding	27

Heredity	29
How to Give Birth	32
Collecting	34
The Affliction	37
Bitterroot	39
Contrary	41
Scalding	43
The Thread	44
Man Meat	47
Every Building Is A Grave (III)	49
The Apparition	51
Acknowledgments	53
References	55



## HIS DARING WOODCRAFT

**P**a heard with shoulder, neck, foot, rib even. Softened my heartbeat with a goose feather vest stuffed with geese he shot hisself. Could be, he picked up a *prowwess* for sound. Git that whistle stoppered, boy. Git quiet.

Animals perched in a high branch will first sense deer. Pa *do indeed know the names* by voice—Crow coughs *keb keb*. Turkey makes it plain. Jays will steal a raptor's cry to frighten other jays, so don't be fooled. Chickadee sounds like itself. *Chicka-dee* for a harmless squirrel. *Chicka-dee-dee* for a hawk. *Chicka-dee-dee-dee* for a turrible threat.

Pa say hearing is snaring sound in a loop called a ear. Capturing *abundance* which is all around us. Now, older'n Pa, it's *wave upon wave* of attention paid to sougning grass, *faint pressure* of a wolf's tail on a branch. Embraced by beetles skittering over leaves *like an unrent mantle*. Creak of thickening bark. Hoof sponging rock moss or velvet shed dusting from raw antler.

JULIAN MITHRA

At dusk, bats squeak *far beyond the utmost limits* of my trap. I ordain *lonely stragglers* by gleaning do-si-do wings. Chrysalis crackles. Spring, *fairly thronged* with pollen strumming through the glade. Every sound *whetted my appetite* for silence.

## JACK-LIGHT

**A**t a lily marsh, we slow the stolen boat with a drag-chain to a strand crowded with dark ash, white oak, and beargrass. Johan motions to quiet our clacks and wrap the oar in flannel. Deer trickle to the shoulder, tongues lower their heads to lap and their ears lower invisible mouths.

Without drinking the mother will die. Without milk her fawn will die. Without fawns the mother will stare at moving water like she forgot its purpose.

Meagram unclasps the bark lamp's door, forcing the flame in a line with broken mirrors. Johan rudders the craft close in. I unlatch the safety and rest the butt against leather on my left shoulder. I am a man among cheatful men.

We have no follow in us. We have no talent to track, sign, seek, or stalk. We can't smell an acorn fall. We can't crumble scat in our palm. We forsake noble still-hunting for hunger and a dirty quickness. Hurry dogs us into our last box of bullets. The same

JULIAN MITHRA

hurry that wrenched me from the womb early and upright onto legs and into boy and now gumption.

The jack-light's the trick to bring a small sun past the shoulder of dusk where it doesn't belong. Is that shape a —? Her two eyes: dishes of snow. Arrested, they call it.

Hushed, Lars elbows me. He means, wait til you aim for her shoulder and ribcage. I know! I'm a waterfall. A vow so loud you hafta shout. Danger to trout. Froth forced into freefall.

Anchor strands me in the water, sticks buffeting the craft. The deer stares. Froze as a frontier.

Does she breathe? Transfixed by our trick falling into the sun, drowning in attention.

I have kilt six deer. At's a fact.

If I don't, the men'll believe the curse has ricocheted and lodged in my swelter. The deer eye terrored into my shoulder and stung me with thirst and motherhood. Its strand of frost stilling my shot.