

THERE ARE STILL WOODS

Poems

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VISITATION

It starts when the animal discovers you.
Ears perk up, widen.

Eyes focus, blood courses.
Leaves crunch under your feet.

The nose twitches, asking:
What kind of creature are you?

So you stand still and ask yourself
as the answer pumps in the lungs.

Easy to wonder *Who am I*
but not to ask *What*.

When the animal sees you, it starts.
You are gazed upon,

you are feared,
you are meat, specimen, sight.

The animal must decide what to do.
You have stepped out of the wilderness,

a breathing shape,
a thing to be regarded.

The animal must choose, and so must you.
The thread unravels and is pulled back in.

Pile of leaves, moonlight.
Hoof in dirt.

HOW IT HAPPENED

November 2016

When the moon falls out of the sky
we stop our cars by the side of the highway
and open our mouths.
The light pours through our fingertips.
We glow in the dark with rage.
Lit by our own insides, we search
for the ones still covered in darkness.
We light up trees with our touch,
place our hands on mammals
we used to hunt. No need
for food now that we're plugged
into the fire left over from the sun.
The silver settles within
our blood. We lift
our hands to the ink-
dark sky and fold
down a corner
to dog-ear the night.
We will want to remember how it happened
that the scenery held in place
by such thin and fraying strings
came crashing down
not with a thud but with
the tinny sound of spilled light,
and how we didn't see it coming,
nor did we expect the light
to land in the rivers of our throats.
How quickly the sky
was done with its light
and how fitting our bodies were
to catch it and turn it to song.

PICNIC ON THE MOON

It's like that episode of *Mad Men*
where Betty Draper tosses the picnic blanket
in the air and the scraps go flying, except here
the trash hovers and doesn't drop.
On the last day of our honeymoon
we reach for floating glasses of champagne,
remark on mid-afternoon stars
and the weatherless perfection of space.
We toast over the glow of sodium
and potassium atoms and the unknown
others that shimmer invisibly
in our borrowed air.
Among neon, helium, argon, carbon
dioxide we read, *Many other species are expected*,
and we wait for them,
whether biological or not,
whether microscopic or visible
to the human eye, whether friend
or luminous enemy, we wait
as the box of crackers
and olive tin drift from our fingers
to some other galaxy
that will, millennia from now,
accept our leftovers as a sign
of life from somewhere else.
I reach for your hand but it takes
forever, since atoms here almost never collide—
surface boundary exosphere, they call it—
so we remain in the pose of *almost*
before returning to our thicker atmosphere
as we sit and stare and I stitch glassy lyrics
into the infinitesimal air.

THESE FIRES

We count the stars
from within the small frames
of our bodies.

Heads propped
against pillows on the terrace,
the three of us: one plus two

who passed through me
with a sudden gasp,
bodies broken from my body.

Our fingers point
to that dome of darkness
speckled with the ash

of burning gases,
fires of fury
or love or what can't

be named because the dark
holds its secrets tight.
The way I hold you.

We're here, aren't we?
Leashed to the earth no matter
how far we run.

I must teach you
what I haven't learned myself:
to be body-bound.

To count on your fingers
what I know to be infinite: those fires
up there. These fires down here.

But who will teach us
how to dissipate
back into light?

STAY, EARTH

Tonight, in this still-breathing century,
we encase each other,

saving all the warmth we can
draw from our bodies.

Tonight, we let the ash fall,
let the snow begin its layering upon us.

We're ready to fossilize
this way, your leg wrapped over mine,

my mouth whispering, *Stay, Earth, fold.*
Let them know we were here.