

FERAL

what held you inside
yourself your skin
a tight band of sky

around a blank
colonnade of sea
I do not know

where you are
except in the secret book
hunger unwrote each morning

I think you might
have lived forever
I don't know

how to speak
to you without
a narrator's hand ghosting
in your throat
without imagining

you carrying everything
cave-dark that fell
out of me clumps of it
the blackened wick

TRAIL MAGIC

spur track to pit
toilet & piped spring

lean-to
on the lee side

jerky & toothpaste
in the bear box

what do bodies do
to other bodies

strangers asleep
on each side each
kicked in hip

wet socks
rabbitted from rafters

breath my breath

try to imagine
what I did
before

salt wave
shouldering
ladder of wet
skin on wet skin
on bitter
thumb pressed
petals of the asshole
breath my

kicked in hip

+

I thought once
I could be erased

lavish threshed illiterate

wished it
from bodies
my own hand

+

what I blotted
out with walking

the smooth bole
of desire

paced wallow
of ferns
hock sucking mud

the memory
of interiors

& stories
I lost those too
could barely lift
my wrist my knee

LONG TRAIL

The river yellow
with what it pulls
from the pines

the raccoon
on the bank
hung on a copper wire
of thirst its blackened
eyes its shifty
veil of flies
a cupped leaf

swallowed
by heavy water

the half life of loneliness bread
& instant coffee
eaten standing

after putting on boots
before tying laces

at dawn & at dusk
the body can't
tell pains apart
belly from back
the hands shake

for sugar & salt
fingernails like a place
the moon was cut out of
hands broken

by the rope
ladder into the ravine

the water low today
the pump's thrum
whetting a blade

of noise it keeps the head
blank like the animal
familiar the tongue finds
inside its mouth
like the silence
or is it sound
of the river
that runs its knife
through the night

TRAIL NAME

wilderness to wilderness
I wore two marks
at the base of my back
as though I had been bitten
by the softest
heaviest mouth

the low spruces crowd out
what once wanted

thumbprint hummingbirds
in the jewel weed
the broach of a bruise
on my hip imagine if
I had sent you this letter:
*I no longer miss
being touched*

look how
my script has grown
so big in the cold

LONG TRAIL

switchbacks scrawl
nonsense up Nameless Ridge

low crooked
searchlight buzzards
hung over
the bald top

did you see me carry
my spoonful of fire

mushroom caps
overthrown
a black dog
running wide eyed
through the honey
locusts

+

alone on the ledge
my body was all
that held the ground

cloth down
a voice outside
said *girl?*
I swear

I am here

I would like to tell you
I found tracks

circling where I slept

but the earth was too hard
to capture a mark

FORAGE

caught when I dug
a trap in the woods
branches laced
over the pit

*You could have hurt
a child broken
an ankle*

pine needles braided
until they snapped

caught when I started a fire
with a bow caught
hoarding matches
under my tongue

+

the lean-to
was big enough
to sleep me
& the dog the cold
falling off her
coat like water

a sheet over
a mirror

+

carry a pot
to boil
water pooled
breath
on tarp seams
grey bouquet

you can eat
clover sorrel
cat tails

be willing to kill
small animals

be decisive
not cruel

+

I rubbed mud on my arms
stuck leaves and lichen on
my chest
cracked if I moved

I lay still

forgive me
please I did not
know another child
would replace me

+

to write
use poke-berry
& black walnut crushed
in books
children stayed
in the woods
seasons then
seasons more

*everyone was happy
when they returned*

in books
children buried themselves
in leaves for warmth

to the neck
quickly the ink
began to rot
I ran out

of smooth stones
to scrawl on
in books
children who live
in the woods
were orphaned
they don't have to

say it

+

I can tell you
how to catch a fish

with a waterfall

how to make bitter
acorn bread hollow
out a tree with fire
in the woods
I'm always

looking for something
to eat caves
to call home
always reading

stories about children
raised by creatures
as kind as wolves

+

in the woods
you can be honest

about how much work
survival is

always looking for twigs
dry enough
to kindle a stone
to carry in case
an animal comes at me
from some corner
some night

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