



In honor of National Poetry Month
April 2021

From 45 Walks in Bloedel

For my sister and Amy

in the meadow—

Pollen ripples pond surface and still,
I've only seen the heron in flight, and the red-wing
and sparrow in song.

Birch bare-barked and leaning makes me miss my father.
Only budding now, I know the leaf's fate. Life
surprises me still.

Sun

is a silent companion, even as it wakes
and the nuthatch bends the wild
asparagus with her unscaled weight.
She sings when she flies.

I am told sound waves are written
in the brain, captured by the cochlea, a snail's shell. Cerebral scribe,
please write in my mind the tap-tap-tap of flicker.

The first time I passed here
the daffodil were young, now they bow
to the season. My sister lifted the face of one to meet hers.
"This flower is nothing like the others."

And a few footbreaths later, crossing the stream,
"I understand the despair of bridges."

I have learned to say salal when I mean endure,
and that fiddleheads are the instruments the spider
strings.

In the forest I have brushed my skin with swordfern
leaf to limb to breast. My back arched.

This too is making love—

denning season, half-howl, coyotes fucking.

One morning a rabbit scream. Another sound of need.

I want to know what the skunk cabbage knows.
And feel bees lick my anther.

Lead me where sound goes when it leaves.

I want to learn not to be frightened
by what I hear. Like the moss on this cedar,
holding dew, dripping sun.

Does the willow see its reflection
on water and say, "weeping?"
"She makes her mother worry," my friend whispers
as we pass. A trillium stem
once picked never again
blooms.

When I am lonely, I will say these names:
Trillium, violet, lichen.

I have spent my whole life never once seeing
this tree flower—and now here it is, offering
blossom, like it were some common thing.

I want to come back as shade.

Why is this water called Sound
when it is surely Sea?

The architect of this garden
could not see color, so he selected these plants by texture.
This is how I want to be chosen, by curve and serration
Barkfeel and grain.

One day the massive cedar snag will fall,
tearing path and alder, peeling earth.
But not today.

Imagine being gifted a garden.

Here, it is yours.

I'll never know what scent embraced me
at this turn in the stream but I will call it honeysuckle
Kindness. Or surrender, for the blossoms
that fell last night. My god,
to be a nurse tree and hold another's roots within me.

An iris didn't belong here.
Until now. There are no accidents
of birth. When I crush the magnolia petal
with my heel, I smell forgiveness.

Some things don't need to resolve.

I can identify any Douglas fir, yet I know
only one. Its song is a sough.

And here, a doe and her fawn.

Our eyes meet. I can hear

Roethke breathing. Wind, I'm told,
Is the last thing I'll hear before dying. Yet
It is still now and *by this daily dying*
I have come to be.

How old is moss? How is born? Please
draw your answer on my body. With mud.

Lichen, violet, trillium. Salal. Bloedel.

Here is the place where water made love to light and gave birth
to silence.

A young boy once asked his mother,
“What kind of sound does she make?”
“This,” I wish I could have said.

*the line “by this daily dying I have come to be” is borrowed from Theodore Roethke

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