

The Appalachian Trail

Where the old wind lives. The road is lunar, so it changes
into a cuticle and becomes black as dapples of Aspen eyes.
Where you washed clothing and sat with only the gasping perfume
of a catching fire. Where you walked through the lie
of only this life into another and then another. Where you wrote
postcards unsent while watching slivers from the dark door
of another marked day. As if the Appalachian was whistling back
your soul in spite of constant evictions under cool bark
of The Dog Star scraping her wet, whimpering claws.

Will you now always be a ranger in the end? Under glowing fir
of twin stars hemmed to not be apart? You survived
yourself, you survived in the ways in which lonely men desire to
in howling paleness. Crest of callus sickled where boots
left earned scars, more skin than skin previously untested
like plucked, naked heels of Mercury. Staff of sunlight guided
you through shoaling wildflowers made true by heart-breaths
of jeweled insects. In messages from harped bodies,
our species learned to embrace possibility
of music in the blue dark. Where you saw one person out, then another
a private epiphany was made more secret. Lungfuls
of Smokey Mountain where monked trees wore leaves like cassocks.

You went out against devotions that ask us to keep breathing—
in scents of an old lover's shirt. Instead you found the lush drive
to live that appears in an old bull. You returned
with your backpack and the blued scents of animals
placed crookedly against my yellowed Manhattan walls. You returned
once my lover, and twice my best friend. You returned with love
that would become so large. As if God gave you the chore to return
with a missing calf. She lifted her head—
to witness contrails making lazy crawls
softened before disappearing