

Foragers' Ecology of Nickerson (Body Wish)

Fifteen thousand years ago, Father Glacier left home in a hurry and it seems unlikely, now, that he will ever come back to lay claim to the estate he left behind. So, since we first came to sleep on the boulders, we have considered Nickerson ours.

In this, our palace, the pitch pine and scrub oak, first-time lovers can touch each other and realize their bodies are the strangest and most natural things. So, when it was my time, my girl held me bare against the ground below dense summer leaves.

Clean sweat from my back dampened the hot dirt on which I lay. Twigs, pebbles, little carnal implements—they dug into me, broke skin where my bare body met Mother Ground. She had led me so far from our usual paths that, suddenly, my wilderness felt wild. When my girl and I returned to the foragers, I needed no explanation for my appearance, because being stained and scratched by woodland is most natural here. On the shores of Little Cliff, I spit

on some thick dust and turn it into mud. When Father Glacier ran off, he stomped eight great kettle holes into Nickerson, hundreds more beyond. Long before we loved here, Mother Ground filled the footprints with fresh water from her cool belly,

and so long as they're not dyed deep green by cyano bloom, in the daytimes we gatherers of berries and bird eggs submerge our whole fragile selves in the wide kettle ponds, and we open our own beaks wide, singing at the sweet pleasure of being fed. In the nighttimes, we run our hands over each bare inch of our broken bodies; we pull out the ticks, the bloodsuckers. Then, we all sleep together humming *hush, hush, hush*, on top of Whale Rock in a human heap of animal warmth.

I-95 S 5:30 PM And All the Rest at Once

Behind us, light leaks golden through the surface of the clouds:
their pale skin, thinned and broken. The sky's secretly warm interior
reveals itself in my rearview. I was once the girl-child who fell
fast on the summer blacktop and could not tear
her eyes from her bloody knees, her bloody palms,
her own sudden red openness, thinking,

Was this inside me all along?

A few Aprils ago I scraped away the outermost layer of myself
with my fingernails to see if I could uncover something vital.
Purple hyacinths congregated by the wire fence again; they brushed
very slightly against each other as they prayed. I cut
a few flowers at their feet with my silver scissors, then wound
and knotted them to the metal rod on the broken
second shower. Sunlit in my passenger seat, you now softly
curve over four CDs laid out in your lap, deliberating who
we will hear next. We're nearly home again, where your sheets
are stained by evidence of me. Skin peels
off my hands like the outer bark of an old yellow birch
and yes, it is almost springtime, but winter returns sharply
once the sun dives deep. Tonight, we will crack
the window open and let the old radiator clamber on,
so our bedroom will be both cold and hot at once.
I'll lift your blouse and brush my fingertips over
your stomach's soft surface as slightly as I can.

Darling, were you inside me all along?

Without us realizing, you traveled 'em
seven youthful Augusts to my papa's little seaside town,
my earliest and most cherished eternity. Somehow
you've known my own greysoft bay and marshland; you've overturned
granite cottages of the rock-crabs, my same
general store raspberry tea and sugar
cigarettes still mellow on your tongue. And all this time
you've been burrowed beneath the shore stones, there in the deepest
layer of my body, warm and simply waiting
to reveal yourself. And all I've known as my own,
you've known, too. And all I've loved as my own,
you've loved underneath.

The Marsh

"Nature likes to hide itself" -Heraclitus

Seventeen years I pooled in the valleys of a girl
and when it was time to become a woman, I,
instead, spit out the marsh.

I spent hot nights binding cordgrass to my chest,
flattening the tidal flow with an ace bandage

but the marsh cannot be bound,

so it pooled cool in my nests: mud-
curved hips and mud-
creased thighs...

I skipped meals like flat stones, smiled

to my mirror, counting the ripples,
though by morning I swallowed them, too,

for the marsh knows hunger well,

it is salt-steeped tongue and salt-
soaked sheets,
but much more than salt.

Seventeen years I pooled in the valleys of a girl
but, seagrass now pecks her surface
like the heron rising, wetly, from his egg-

and the sun, it shyly follows.