

Jenifer Browne Lawrence

Fishing in Alaska I Lose Another

Because you left me in Ketchikan
I taught myself to catch the cutthroat

standing creek-like, tapered trap of my hands
motionless to the point of no sensation.

I slept on a cushion of air
between the bear cub and its mother,

ate berries that stained
my fingers the shade of your veins.

I ran beside the Douglas squirrel
from hollow to sky and back,

bathed in a duff of needles
gathered beneath another's limbs.

I bear-walked the trail with elderberry and fern
arboring the shape of my spine,

braided cat's tail moss into my hair.
I stood shouldered between firs to watch you pass,

chose not to say your name
to prevent its lodging like a fishbone in my throat.

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January at the Idlenot Cemetery

Unlike the crow-scraped moss that yields the grub,
this ground is hard. Who kneels will bruise as wind-
fall apples do, though crocus blades switch dark
for light, burn green in sun that scatters like
the juncos wintered in. Between photinia
Nootka rose is spare, its garb a solace
fit to hunger in. The iris rhizomes
blacken, buried shallow as our dead.
Some stray, some stay to see the fruit-lit fire
subside in bruises slumped like broken gates
beneath the boughs of apple trees, above
the markers etched with dates of born and died.
This ground is hard. The apples fall, and crows
storm winter rosehips, dropping stone on stone.