

Michael McDowell

Perseid Meteor Shower

Mt. Hood Wilderness

My daughter and I roll out sleeping bags
onto our moss-green tarp
on this ridgeline above Cast Lake.

Here, far from city lights, almost a mile up,
the stars shyly hint their presence
in the sundown sky.

Alpine hemlocks and firs crowd the sky
but minute by minute more stars
arrive and take their seats for the evening.

We wait and wait, the temperature dropping,
the wind hurdling the ridge like a track star,
animals quieting for the Main Event.

A streak of light zips across the sky!
But the firmament makes no sound, offers no applause.
“Did you see that!” Julia shouts.

We wait and watch, a quick line here, a hint there.
The shooting stars perform against a not-quite-yet-black scrim,
warming up for the sixty-per-hour show.

But then the unwelcome moon glows behind a ridge
and rises, blotting the stars with chalk-white light—
jealous celebrity, night sky bully.