

precognition

*When I talk of taking a trip, I mean forever.
-Adrienne Rich*

You sped on the highway, hurtling us towards the Okanagan:
cabin, lake, slow river in the back.
All that promise, the sharpness of the August heat,
the days unspooling and buttery. Pinprick of joy, fleeting.

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Mustard greens choked the edge of the river,
and you built an embank to keep the silvery water at bay,
fill the lacuna that had so recently been there,
carrying wood and stones tenderly in your arms.

You chopped more wood, the axe so sharp and sure in your hands—
I wanted to wrest it from your palm,
let you touch me with that same force instead.

I watched you from the dock, where boats whizzed by,
whirring and wheezing against the water,
the sky above a runny blue, somewhere between cerulean and slate,
birds arcing north, nosing forward, nubivagant.

When you came down to the dock, you were glossed with sweat,
the sheer sheen of it across your back when I put my hand there.

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How long have we been here?
Long enough to move rocks, chop wood,
to have sex in the cabin, on the beds, and on the 1970's linoleum,
the raised imprint of it on my spine later,
a tattoo of the fury of your hips against mine.

I bake wild blackberry pie, and we eat it with our bare hands,
turning bloody and brazen as animals.
How did we turn this domestic—
axe and apron, sweat and sunglow—
when we meant to be anything but?

It won't last—does it ever?—but the embankment held, the river did not migrate,
and you woke me up to inky darkness,

your mouth travelling the terrain of my shoulders, my back,
your lips coming away tasting like sunscreen and sunshine.
Now, your hands wresting something from me—love, maybe—
and my heart is a staircase,
a clamour of feet, a balter at the bottom.