

Cabin in the Minnesota Woods

Katherine Edgren

I can name mouse tracks on the road after rain.
I know the lobster mushroom, the purple aster,
campion, columbine, and wild artichoke.
I can find wolf milk slime on decaying logs.
Facing wildness every day, I let it stir me,
though I can never truly understand.

Eagles hail me as I glide along their shore,
accustomed to me as I to them; even mottled ones,
before they earn their heads and tails of white.
Here, like my dog, I'm free to run or sit,
sleep or wake when and where I wish.

I've seen the shapes and colors clouds take.
I've watched the sun's slow journey west
at the coming equinox, the tilt of Earth
imaginable and tangible, at this latitude.

I've heard the continuum of wind: the Heathcliff
kind that renders breathlessness, and the lack of it
permitting kayaking along the shore,
peering at what's deep and clear.
Having lost power from a downed tree,
I've come to wholly appreciate electricity.

This is the place I've come hurt or picked up hurt:
a tooth, a foot, a leg, an eye, my old war wounds.
Here, I've grown intimate with pain, and found
the forgiveness that sometimes accompanies healing,
but have rarely known insomnia in days so full
tumbling into oblivion is easy.

Here I put myself in the open face of awe,
and build my life upon its rock, possessing
knowledge that is sedimentary, layered
with years before, years still with me. This

is where I know the drop-offs where fish gather,
where I spy merganser, kingfisher, and pelican.
This is where — hearing the voice of the loon —
I've scattered ashes, remembering all those lost to me.

I've sat by woodstove fires for warmth and illumination.
I've known the cast of light at sunrise, the sweep and rush
in just one day, patience that's deep, and how to love
what changes, the thread of transience stitching into me.