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Robert Cooperman

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Hair Filled With Sun: the Colorado Rockies, Late 19th Century

by Robert Cooperman

When we escaped Gold Creek,
for a life of wilderness wandering,
I cried at first, for my bed,
a bath, clean fingernails,
but soon saw them as fripperies.

The first time I snared a rabbit,
I clapped hands with the joy
of a girl mastering ice skates.
When I learned to make fire
from twigs, dry leaves,
and my inspiring breath,
I watched, rapt as God—
forgive my blasphemy—
calling the sun into existence.

Soon, I could sniff out deer,
the rank brutality of bears,
could brazen wolves
from their kills.
We never attempted those thefts
on wolverines: more fierce
than any creature save Mr. Sprockett,
God rest the troubled angel
of his soul.

Soon, I could find
a trail or bushwhack one
through what a white man
would deem impassable brush.
The years have sped by
in our delight and hard work.

And soon, so very soon—
my aching bones
and rasping breaths inform me—
I must tread the trail that ends,
I pray, in mountains untouched
by toadstools of white settlements.

May we walk to that Good Land
Like trusting children, hand in hand.

