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Lydia Webster

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Turkey Run

by Lydia Webster

We're checking an old fire above Turkey Run, a steep canyon dense with
 pine and fir
where lightning struck the packed cliff wall below the crest.
We drive the broken road as far as we can, then hike in,
radios strapped to our chests, quarts of water slung like flasks.
Overhead, a cloud tinted pale aquamarine, two red-tailed hawks.
Touching the wet smolder for hot spots, where the fire
fingered out, we walk the perimeter pushing over charred logs,
then circle back to camp through a creek-fed valley, open and alive as
 a prairie,
and long before we see her, we smell the dead cow
lying down by the creek, three buzzards on her back.
All around, the lush grasses, the wildflowers—squirrel tail and
 snakeweed, macarantia, star thistle,
beeplant, yarrow, lupinus, crucifer. I remember the cow skull
in the bog up Corduroy Canyon: the white gleam of horn floating in
 shallow teal water, bidden by grass;
I remember the man who shot himself in the guest house, looking in the
 mirror.

You said, "Who drinks the wine should take the dregs,"
live life until it's all played out, no matter if death looks dear,
your own gift so clear—naked witness and acceptance—
you watched your aging mind hang like a fragmented star
in the body's dark decay, its oriental yearning to be
nothing, like the quiet cow, the fire played out,
even as you watched the dark wing of civilization cover the earth.
You said your children, and their children, "will find their way,"
and so your poems dust the world with the seed of what remains
eternal—words—shining where the earth breeds color, amid the
 crimson blooms—
their cool, mineral glow; their ash-white bones.

