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SUDDEN SUMMER STORM

I stood in the creek, knee deep, dug in
like a sorrow, a metaphor of a man
immured then surpassed by the horizontal
blur of his life, then just a man

from whom feeding birds veered, fledglings
banking inches from my face. Wing-whir
I felt, one indelible drop of rain

that said: made of the same blood are time
and an instant of time. Soon a deluge
of instants and a thin cast of water
slightly pewter in the leaf-steeped light
contained me, held what I could not. Above

fleet cloud-knots dragged a canyon funneled
strand of wind which set to flaking away
my skin made of moments. Shuck of instants,
invisible husk of what was: I grasped at it

and touched myself. Folding over my bones,
cobble, the water made the sound of a great throat
gulping. With what would you be sated,
I did not ask, because I feared the thalweg's answer.

THE LAND AS HANDMAID, POSTULANT TO HERSELF

Sudden, suddenly pleating the drift-ransomed peaks:
 December cloudlight. The draw like a hawthorne-pricked
 finger welling shade even noon's gauze can't blot-up,
 the land (and I can say that word, albeit myopically)
 taking its vows. Larch needles drooping to lichen floor
 like so many rings passed into a prioress' open hand:

Don't worry, child, no need for those here.

Not wind but motherhush through the leaf-renouncing
 branches. Not buck but gangly fawn
 pressing hoofprints into the virgin and virgining snow.

BLOWN SNOW

To witness the ten thousand worlds, witness
 snow galloping headlong in grains across
 drifts of former parasol flakes packed tight
 by oak-cracking cold; or the stalled-in-air
 leper-skin harried on by gust-flung curds:
 each of the countless forms asserting
 wordlessly its own distinct name.

Such are
 the myriad cries of a newborn, waking
 (in the hour of vanishing-as-it-lands skiff)
 to be nursed, or (in the sleet-colored moment
 when wind severs cloud and what's fallen
 bristles with light) to wonder not where she is
 but if.

Watch her small temples throb, the way
 one wail does not reap tears while another,
 beginning in her fistred toes, turns skin folds
 around her neck into rivers of salt. You
 in whose shape she was shaped, whisper
 into her ears, once more, that name, single
 warm consolation to the cold.