

“What you've heard is true.”

We gazed at the naked side of Humphrey's peaks,  
The side that the volcanic crater is visible from,  
A tilted bowl that, from the city, appears to be just like any other mountain range  
Just around the corner, Lockett Meadow spills out in a flaming cacophony  
Of wild sunflowers, california poppies, and color-shifting aspen.

I found her just beyond the ridge of a hill ,  
just a few paces away from the cabin  
With my mentor's directions repeating in my head to the rhythm of my stomping incline  
“Find something dead and ask it what it knows.”

I found her just as I decided I wanted to follow the ridge to the summit;  
She lured me away,  
Like a disruption in the earth's magnetic field,  
True north was a fallacy compared to her rotten glow  
And The yellow rays of sunlight that spot-lit her  
through the coniferous canopy

All I could think was  
“What you've heard is true, it must be  
What you know is god, I bet  
I know nothing at all, and I think I will be lost forever.  
I think that's part of living,  
Part of being  
Human.”

My shoulders slumped and my chest was suddenly heavy

I leaned my left ear against her dry, sweet smelling bark

“That mountain over there used to be a volcano. It was a lot taller until one day

It exploded,

Fire that flowed like sap was everywhere,

Like a mudslide or a flash flood.”

I twisted my neck further to rest my forehead on a smooth stump where once

a branch may have been

“What do you know now that you've died?”

A gentle, gradual gust of wind traveled from tree to singing tree,

Needles tinkling together, a whispering percussion

Squirrels scraped at bark and dropped empty pine cones onto dry, dusty soil and yellow,

snapping pine needles

Compass needles spinning wildly,

Chickadees harmonized with diving needle-beaked hummingbirds,

I am alive

Her voice rings and resonates like a crystal bell in my head

Over and over, she sings

“I sway in the breeze, I fall in the meadow.”