“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 tinking 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.”