

LOST

She was an unscheduled blip
on a green-gridded screen. A pink trillium
nodded at her ankle, already swollen
where she turned it on a fallen branch imbedded
in the woodland floor beneath medallions of lichen.
Her limp worsened, making her an easy target
for burdocks shredding her hose, red-beading
her shins. Her face, belonging in a townhouse,
lips hovering over a Wedgewood cup,
bore the incipient vining of fear.

The sign had said 3/4 of a mile to the falls.
She'd heard they were pretty; why not stop?
A couple she met at the trailhead
assured her it was an easy walk, no climbing.

Lacking comfort of candy bar or cell phone,
she watched the sun leave a livid future
above the canopy of whispering. Shedding pines
needled her steps. Her bitten cheek
blossomed like an old embarrassment.

All the trees seemed to be clones
of the one where she had seen a bright bird
beckon like the urge to atone for something.
She was sure she made a wrong turn there.

The forest widened with choices, compressed
with sameness. Conspiracies of wind and leaves
persuaded her she was approaching the falls.
The same wind canceled her calls for help.

She was a non sequitur in a bad joke.
She gave a short laugh, her inner eye watching
from some clue, mind racing back
to her car parked on paving near the interstate.
The white mycelium of panic threaded through
her like unseen fungus beneath her feet.

She told herself repeatedly
there had to be a river close by
where she would pick up the path. People
who loved her waited only 90 minutes away.
Roots, rocks, decaying logs, hidden gullies
waited for dark.

--Glenna Holloway