

Holloway
913 E. Bailey Rd.
Naperville IL 60565

Full
Version
Good

October Before Sleep

Night slips early into my tent
and sleeping bag. First star sparks are cold
by the time they fall through my skylight flap.

Outside, my canvas presence goes gray
among shapes of wild dissymmetry.
Native noises divide the not-quite dark
where ground maples still glow like banked fires.

Eyes closed, I sort living autumn-- small claws
scrabbling in leaf mold, ballooning throats,
strumming legs, sounds underscored
by random breezes bumping into branches
and idle water. Labeling makes tentative peace
with faint what-ifs left over from childhood.

For miles today I followed the Black Hand,
an Indian-marked sandstone ridge
bulking between stands of cloud-thirsty pines.
The painted symbols point to outcrops of flint
I could never find as a scout bucking for a badge.

My thumb explores facets of the chips
rattling in my palm. Irresistibly I make sparks
in the gloom, feeling hot blips on my fingers.
Magic still abides in these ancient keys
to sharp-edged tools and fire. October
is the mother of magic.

It was decades ago I was here.
But only I am different.
A loon on the lake crazes moonless quiet,
two and a half notes spilled in space. I smile
and roll over slowly in the mild warmth
of acceptance. It's still a while before winter.

--Glenn Holloway