

Ariel Macbell

Lost, with Super Blood Wolf Moon

The sandwiches were soggy when we got there but we ate them anyway,
crouched as a pack by the sulfurous pools swirling with moss

and dead skin, the heat just enough to fight the brisk January air,
steam rising like hackles, chasing goosebumps away even as they formed—

In the pool nearest, a naked man boasted loudly of his three decades
of visits there, how he knew the easiest trails back to the head,

a local's guarded secret he might share. We looked at his face when he talked
to avoid the pink, coiled animal between his legs, rising slightly in the water.

His left side sagged like the slow erosion of the valleyed cliffs looming ahead
and behind us, the look of a man that was happy and angry all at once.

He asked us questions as we soaked and we fabricated answers; told us,
“everything has a mouth out here,” and we nodded like we already knew.

When he offered his directions, we took it with the dumb trust of children,
having stared at the clean honesty of his skin for too long.

The sun sank early over the ridge and a wind roared itself to life as we went, filling our ears with a noise as terrible as the river's churning.

Soon the clouds took their places before the moon, darkening the world so completely our phones did nothing but blind us. We dragged our feet for hours

in what we realized too late or knew all along was the wrong direction, talking of everything but certainty, which seemed too dangerous a thing

with the white teeth of the river glinting so near, a wet fury of language spilling from its mouth. Of the naked man we said nothing also,

though we wanted to froth like the river, a beastly anger growing in us, that we could be so easily misled, that we should refuse to turn around.

Just when we might have taken a bite—a red glow swept over everything. The wind howled its pitiless howl, vaporous wisps turned bloody overhead,

and the red matter of the moon smoldered like coal turned over, promising fire. How long we gazed into its heat, the impression burned like a brand

behind our lids, that even now, emerged, we need only close our eyes to feel its warmth, the chill of our bodies, lost, turning wild.

Circe Takes Stock

The boars snuffle for tubers in the damp, tusks gorgeous in obsolescence, going only dirt and tree bark, their coarse bristles trembling with boar want in the North breeze, Borcas's swell breath.

Their eyes have lost that unseemly glint of man, the particular horror of conquest. I spank their ugly hides and say, *good piggy*, and feed them nuts from my hand. They are still so greedy.

Too many of them, the walls of my sites groan and splinter their sides, and more tomorrow, marring my horizon with their lustful boats, heaving chests draped in finery or sweat, but always with steel in their hands.

A dark speck like a fly on the ocean's back even now, as I go about picking rosemary, singing to the bees, coaxing carrots up, the potatoes plump, the scallions long and thick, the spit bronzed with crystallized fats.

They want to love me; I know not to love them. They have not lost their sense of fraternity—if I slit the throat of my fattest pig in plain sight of the others, they cry and screech as if they've all been wounded.

I lead my choice by the low beard to the grove where a young olive tree needs watering. He bucks with a suspicion born too late, my knife sharp, my hand quick with practice. I string him up by his muscled hinds.