

## COVERT CABIN, UNMAPPED ROAD TO SUN-UP

Twenty-odd years since I saw the place.  
My triumphant shout jarred the green-filtered  
afternoon when I found it. First 48 hours  
a fast blur. Sawing limbs, salting fish, chinking  
both windows. Proving my survival skills  
to my long-secret self. Even planted spring hopes  
next to mother's wolfsbane-- I call it  
winter aconite, little more than a weed--  
now usurping the realm, her once glorious garden.  
Just before escaping civilization, I bought bulbs,  
certain this swatch of Saskatchewan sky  
far from people never blued over daffodil ruffles.

Diminishment set in the second day--  
as if my being, my body-- didn't displace the air,  
the essence of space I occupied. My feet failed  
to leave tracks. "Surroundings" imply  
you're among things life nature you exist.  
I wasn't part of the verb "to be."  
Forget cogito ergo sum, nothing was stretched  
or hollowed out by my presence. If anything  
barely altered the natural superior order,  
it was my muddy Jeep with Michigan tags  
half hidden under the shaggy spruce forest.

Third day shadows multiplied, magnified. Shadows  
not matched with solids. Shapes not fathomed.  
My mother would have chanted in three tones  
for hours. Omens from old tribal tales appeared:  
My hearth flared, a single orange tongue licked  
high in the chimney. It hissed, fell back, died.  
Sickly sun plunged wide shafts in soft earth,  
sucking it dry, giving no warmth, only taking,  
leaving a swath of cold-parched earthworms  
and clay crumbs. Strange paws signed the ground  
by my door. Day dimmed. A lone bolt of lightning  
split a balsam trunk. My calendar fell  
off the wall. A wolf wailed.

The first wind pried the shutters, crashed  
a window pane and my lamp, spilling precious oil.  
Alto afterwind mourned between slaps of chill  
and the wavy scent of wet animals. In a race with  
decaying light, my mother's half of me gathered  
brittle bunches of wolfsbane. My other half gulped  
the dose of drugstore sleep I never expected  
to taste. Still dressed, I united under the blankets  
she wove, each patterned with ancient symbols.