

Actaeon in New Hampshire

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It is raining again, and puddles are filling
with goldfish; they turn in circles, stare upwards
at the vast sky. My left shoe is drenched to the sock
as I again walk through the forest with you.
I would say we are “walking together” but you are far
ahead of me, sure-footed, trouncing through mud.
The game we play is who can maintain their sanity,
the rules made up as we go along. A dandelion
at the side of the path, its forehead leaning against the bramble,
has not a thought free from the stench of nostalgia.
And the raindrops flailing from the branches
are merciless; compelled by icy wind they fall in fits
of derisive laughter, fall laughing.
The score now is three to one: three for you, one for you.
I plan my comeback by contemplating the goldfish,
such simple vertebrates, spines softer than cherry twigs.
Crouched among the blackberries,
cursing the Pope for his boundless compassion,
I spy her, sad doe, face painted with melancholy,
white tail ripened and weary.
The rain pauses. A cricket mutters its evening prayers.