

Robert Thomas

FOXFIRE

God is my secret; he knows I'm his girl. You don't know what he's like. Sometimes he licks my face like a cat lapping cream. I almost caught him once, but he disappeared down the bole of an oak tree. I know he loves me because he gives me presents. I found a bottle cap once, Red Fox Root Beer, on the path I take through the aspens. You've never seen it in a store, have you? A sign clear as candy. And a bar of soap by a bend in the river, scented with Rome apples and never used. I bathed with it for a month, my evening prayer, till it was gone: God wants his gifts used. The suds down my leg like apple blossoms on a branch in the dark. You say he's not real? As soon tell a mother the child's not real that suckles at her breast. I stayed with him all night when he had a fever, fed him shards of ice to keep him alive, and when I had no water, I cooled him with my own spit till I couldn't swallow. Who are you to judge? Come out and you might see something—foxfire from the rot of a fallen cedar, hawk shadow crossing a shaft of cockshut light: he's mine.