Portrait: Parsing My Wife As Lookout Creek

My wife sits, wipes, stands, zips, forgets to flush.

Rushing,

the river's every agenda. We pull at our clothing, all day, humans, us,

all of us.

Try not to touch it.

I stand at the mirror, tuck a tail, a tag, tug a collar, flinch. What face is that?

Dry

outside, there are pines pushing against every reflecting sky in their own grim time.

My mother, tough one, British stiff. Sit up straight. Excuse you. That's a dessert spoon.

Butler's fool,

ambassador for a childhood of rules. One tough one.

Language gets us in its grip with its little links and latches, clasps, clamps,

padlocks,

and we're lost: grappling.

Close your mouth when you chew.

In these river days,

what floats for me to find is the tissue, wet, a red filmy swirl the symptom of a drifting of cells

alluvial shift

in a body I know.

(stanza break)

Do you imagine first the conifer leaves?

Or the buried thread-like roots

deeply reaching for food?

Plunging to touch the hidden skin

of the river.

Dawn's lazy diffusion of hues lights the children's confusion, their breakfast food,

flow

of this river that spews

stripped trunks, a shoe, crescent crust of dead everything, the ongoing plunge of innard and corpse.

Even my stepdaughter laughs, who for now laughs last,

least.

There's nothing funny about PMS: period.

My wife,

sure, she blushes, but it's love like the cat's torn mouse, the breast-split wren,

the rejected owl pellet,

her kind of love,

the river's necessary way of sharing of what she's composed, unburdened by grammars, maps, latitudes, rules, banks.

I am wading

the lava rock and free-stone bed,

the old-growth bole

wedged

and lecturing only by collecting

every drifting thing that the muscle spits up, aggregate of flow, motion of bundling,

clustered abundance of the rushing's best refuse.

I steady my step,

pocket a bottle, sift the river with my fingers, sink into its stunning flood,

touch her every part.

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