

## Forever Wild

The voluminous beast arches  
Its back, its glistening shoulders,  
Its underbelly of luscious inky gray,  
Riding the pulsing air and cracking tidings,  
Ghost around the mountain tops,  
Above the lake's whiteout expanse.  
It rains for 40 days and 40 nights or—  
40 years on earth—or maybe not.

Well, my experiences growing up here  
In Onchiota—as a teenager I remember  
Of one storm you'd get several feet of snow  
That extended to the end of the road,  
That I had to shovel over my head to dig a path.  
Over my head I later noted this bird song I'd never heard before.  
The heat had brought up north  
The teakettle-teakettle-teakettle Carolina wrens.

This book, you know, could be your wished-for aviary  
Backyard-sized; charcoaled and color-penciled  
Birds, labored over by a writer, look sideways or big-eyed at you.  
I'd been disciplined all summer preparing to teach my mentor's novel.  
Before the class started or I wrote him, came the words of his passing.  
I had for fun re-read aloud a more difficult novel of his that you translated.  
I had thought to amuse him with a short reading before the idea became moot.  
The grave regret you'd have understood, or maybe not.

I'm worried if in the next 100 years  
People could hear as I have in the forests  
Bicknell's thrush or the tuneful white-throated sparrows.  
The temperature too warm now for trout—and the black flies  
Invites giant deer flies, early bears, and deep diving  
Loons that sometimes attack baby Mergansers.  
This morning beyond my window a great blue heron flew by,  
Her slow-motioned wings spread out in sync with the calls of the bull frogs.

In spring, kids dig up their swing set like an annual ritual  
Rebirthed from snow that used to pile up to its top frame.  
Nowadays it's much more common to get these thaws  
And long spells of intense rainy weather.

We went camping at a site accessible only by canoes,  
By a field of tiny 5-petaled yellow flowers, translucent, almost porcelain-like.  
A terrific storm raging as if it'd not let up for a whole 40 years  
Flooded the campground for maybe 40 days and 40 nights

In the sky world. A quivery Burgundy red  
Darts through the sheens of fresh feathery leaves.  
Milk-creamy scent of the Locus petals twirling  
Descends upon a white-clad person,  
Stationary, tentative, by the dry road  
That exudes wild aroma of clovers and rosemary,  
A mossy wheeled case in hand and a backpack  
Of the hue of a terrestrial newt orange.

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\*Loosely based on the recordings of Adirondacks climate stories by Six Nations Iroquois Culture Center\_01, Scot Taylor Hewitt Lake; SarnaLake\_09, \_11, \_12, \_15, and OldForge\_July 12\_08