



Exerpt from PMF Vol. 2: Andie Howell

mourning

the first thing i noticed was the smell.

ocean and rotting leaves

and blackberries crushed underfoot

the mountains were smaller

the fog was thicker

and the new owners

had scraped the red paint off the front door.

(i wonder if they repainted my bedroom yet)

the old cherry tree

that middle school me would sit under to read

was now a rotting stump

someone must have finally noticed

that the tree was dead

(it's always been rot and dust inside)

(i didn't care)

she was ten when she first got stuck

in its branches

one velcro pink shoe lying sideways in the mud.

it was just starting to rain

when her neighbour raised one trembling hand

to pull her to the ground

this was before the amputations

before the heart attack

before his widow moved

to the city to escape his ghosts that took refuge

in riding lawn mowers

and brown armchairs

(he had to rescue me again two weeks later)

she was thirteen,

and sitting in a living room steeped in

cigarettes and sharp tongues
and a tiny pink guitar slowly filling with stones.
her host was a freezing rain
 a burning sawmill
 the salmon swimming up maquinna drive in a flood.
her host was already elderly
 but will outlive me purely out of spite
the old village was leaking
lifeblood into the sawdust foundations
and two more businesses had
moved into the closed wing of the school
(maybe they'd get the money to hire a math teacher)

my cellphone is a useless brick
too far from internet or cellular to be
anything but a clock
and i could have sworn i could hear it ticking

I'll buy you a shot if you give me a kiss?

i'm staring at the wall behind him
as he shoves his tongue down my throat
the promise of a vodka shot bouncing around
in my empty head
and i think that's his hand on my left tit

there's too much pressure from my sucked-in gut
for him to unbutton my jeans
he laughs into my mouth, and it tastes like corona.
 "a little help?" he slurs
 and i think he's trying to be seductive
his mouth touches my neck, and suddenly

i'm not at the bar
and i'm not twenty-two
i'm standing, not sitting
he's grown facial hair
his skin has faded six shades and
the hand on my chest is now a hand wrapped around my wrist

and we're just out of sight of the security camera
and his mouth is on my neck
i'm staring at the dumpster behind him
 i think about pushing him in
 but my arms aren't moving
he doesn't seem to care that he's making out with
a seventeen-year old piece of marble and glass
but his mouth is still on my fucking neck
and *no one is coming* to scrape him off of me

that's when i remember the boxcutter in my pocket
and no one is coming to *save him from me*