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Two Poems

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Riverine

Where the Nisutlin grew shallow
and swift, we rested our

paddles on the gunwales,
only dipping them to steer.

We watched the riverbed,
the astonishing velocity

of the round, green boulders
passing beneath us,

and the red-backed spawners

slipping upstream through
the shadows cast by clouds.

And the kingfisher
we startled into flight, gliding

furtively from one sweeper to the next,
while the small bruin raised its snout

in the air, and catching our scent,
turned back into the forest

as we drifted by
and around the bend.

Every night the wolves called
into the unreachable parts of us

and you laughed in your sleep.
It wasn't your usual laugh—

it belonged to the woman
who walked naked into the river

each morning, right to the top of her thighs,
and sunk down, purposefully,

kneeling on the soft gravel to bathe, to see
every heartache suddenly flattened

and carried away on the river's
sun-scalloped surface,

a driftwood fire
blazing on the shore.

Mountain Walking

These early mornings
ravens dismantle

my dreams, dropping
pine cones, then

their quivering, watery
questions, the tent

translucent as an eyelid.

Rustle of goose down, growl
of sleeping bag zipper,

sweat and woodsmoke
in Linnea's morning hair—

mountain heliotrope's slow
acquisition of the rising sun.

A slow walk
between
the krummholz
and dwarf birch.

Lichen-painted scree
to the lookout

where the soul tightens
and pulls in the wind.

Spaciously—

this is the way
the living walk

after they pierce
the firmament

with their heads.

Dust on my boots, a black
stream edged with ice,

and the whistle of the pika,
so unadorned and fierce

it tugs at the sky
where the cranes kettle

always on the verge
of an alphabet.

CLEA ROBERTS lives on the outskirts of Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. Her debut collection of poems, *Here Is Where We Disembark* (Freehand Books, 2010), was a finalist for the League of Canadian Poets' Gerald Lampert Award, was nominated for the ReLit Award, and was translated into German and Japanese. Clea's poems have been published in journals and anthologies in Canada, Europe, the United States, and Australia. She facilitates a workshop on poetry and grief through Hospice Yukon and is the artistic director of the Kicksled Reading Series.

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