

## “Mercy in the Wilderness”

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There is mercy in the wilderness  
The roses howl  
open-mouthed starving deafening

Knotted rat carcass and severed wing on the pavement  
Blinding sun and roaring wind  
Skies made of dragons, words made of snakes

Small New England town  
A happenstance father’s short temper  
Morning blue full of bird shards

The town and the forest both  
too old to be accessible  
too new to be trustworthy

The baby crows for the thousand-year war of the trees  
—orderly advance of the pine and unpredictable  
flanking maneuvers of the deciduous

Rotted branches snap dull as broken ankles  
Paths and pine groves, streams forded  
by abandoned carriage bridges  
Long stone walls spell out a cathedral to futility

Within the day’s tantrums and truisms  
is a peering like moonlight  
through keyholes and tumblers of tangled foliage  
We freeze where we stand when for a moment  
the mechanism engages turns and clicks

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