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# Bloodworms

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the dogs to sweep the fields up to the orchards  
though the authorities can guess he's beaten them to the shafts  
that haven't been used since the Civil War.  
He knows full well they won't risk following him—the supports  
are rotted through, and those pockets of gas tend  
to shift suddenly—he'll forget what  
he's been taught about light.  
He doesn't need to see the reporters  
forcing their way through the road block  
to know that they're screaming for action from the sheriff  
who's just taken off his hat and wiped the sweat  
from his forehead and turned away from his deputies  
who are shooting the pigs.

### BLOODWORMS

My father hides in my blood and breathes air through a reed.  
I have lost his scent. I cannot find him.

Is he in the crack in my spine? In the light behind my pupil?  
I ride on horseback until the sun hurts my eyes;  
it burns the backs of my hands.  
I drink limewater from a metal canteen.  
I pick the lining of his boots  
and plug my ears against the wind.  
I search for pieces of his clothes  
among briars and weeds.

Like a pin, he has made himself small. He is in disguise;  
he has wrapped himself  
in the skin of a doe. He chews  
the roots of my hair. He licks dew from leaves.

I can feel them—the worms—they are in my blood,  
gnawing a tunnel  
through the fat in my veins.  
They want to devour my heart. They listen  
to my father.  
They swim like tiny needles underneath my skin.

I want to tear at my skull  
with the claw of a hammer. I want to expose  
my brain, like the flesh of a wound.

I bless the hands at the ends of my arms. I bless  
my feet and their precarious balance.  
I kill rats as offerings  
to the owls for my passage.  
I carve my skin  
into strips  
and feed them to the birds. Try to deaden  
my senses with a burning wire.

I see the crows circling. I smell my father.  
He lies half-frozen  
at the edge of a clearing.  
The roots embrace his dying body. Neither of us  
begs for forgiveness. His chest and legs  
are turning into wood.

I cut off my head and suspend it in burlap from a tree.  
I shoot my horse in the stomach. I crawl inside it to keep warm.