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# Thorn

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E.G. BURROWS

*Thorn*

The cougar stood just there,  
form curved to accommodate  
scrawny ilex and the chickadee feeder.  
Neighbors were bulldozing their lots,  
driving their yellow machines  
back and forth to erase  
anything suggestive of green.

They wrestled with jimson weed.  
They nudged blades to our fence,  
daring the chain-link to snap  
and the jays to come within birdshot.  
They could not imagine a lion  
except as a yawn on the wall  
or a Disney cartoon character.

But he was there like a photo  
washed in sepia and firelight,  
dogeared by tall tales.  
He had come down from the bitter rocks  
and sour mountain to stand  
patiently with one paw raised.  
But I knew if I reached out

to pull the thorn, he would vanish  
into the granite of a gatepost,  
one of the guardians of libraries,  
for all his pain would dissolve  
into the idea of sanctuary  
and my meaningless good wishes,  
my panther, my good black dog.