

PERIWOUND

Wildfire smoke drifts over the hills and erases the farther shore. I'm waking cold from the same purple dream. It involves the edge of a dark cliff; it involves deep water. Recently, my sister has claimed avoidance as a cure for any ailment. My friend's summer fling buys her a book on avoidant attachment and threatens to dump her. She takes him up on it, and we hit the beach alone. I spend hours kayaking the border where lake turns to marsh—that's where life is. Underwater forests, swollen green; sandhill cranes; nubs of yellow water lilies pushing snout to surface. We only call this periphery because of pontoon boats. *Periphery*, from the Greek *peripheres*: or, *revolving around*. As in, earth and sun, moon trailing. As in, for months after, I can't think of anything else. You get the point. What I don't get is the slippage between *periphery* and *revolve*: either margins circling a fixed middle or middle as water swirling drain.

Driving west on M-55, I pull
an SUV splits his shell right
organ. I can't stand to look
and wish it had been
Sometimes edge is survival,
Summer is slipping away.
down over the lake. I sit
what once lived and grew on
is a fault: part of an ancient
tear in any continent
in an ocean. For reasons
in North America halted
and left us the world's
Geologists nickname it
Heart. A billion-year-old
caulked in by lava, runs

over for a turtle. As I park,
down the middle, splatters
so leave him to double lines
shoulder, where tansy grows.
or at least a prettier death.
Smoke and thunder come
at its lip, imagining
its fault lines. Lake Superior
cratonic shift, the deepest
that did not result
no one can name, the rift
a few million years ago
largest freshwater lake.
North America's Broken
scar. The rest of the rift,
everywhere gravitational

force now sags lower. I have lived in areas of increased gravity my entire life, pulled down by history: the time we rode logging ruts out to Echo Lake, where we swam out to the island and picked blueberries in July, shoeless and sunburnt. Where I camped on the downslope and slid into night, where I slept beside two strange men and neither touched me, where the northern lights rewrote the entire sky. Where our backs rested on the scrap of land between rift and healed wound. Where I was so high I couldn't remember the hike, became six years old again and scared of strangers, the litany of people capable of hurting me. Scared of my own capacity to inflict pain—pain, a house in which I rattle windows, a drop-off I'll either ascend or won't. It's late now and unseasonably sticky. I dream I'm sending a letter to someone I once loved. I dream it's traveling between me and an unfixed point, *peripheres*, revolving. I dream I'm feeding rope down the side of a cliff. If only I looked over, I'd know what I was feeding.