

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,
Maine Poet Laureate*

In this week's poem Portland's Martin Steingesser remembers how getting lost in the woods at summer camp helped him to find himself.

Between Stars

by Martin Steingesser

*"In between stars, what distances, and yet, how much vaster
the distance we learn from what is right here."*

Rainer Maria Rilke, Sonnets to Orpheus

When they sent me away for the summer
at four, the journey itself felt like a year.
Mornings it was make the bed, swab the toilet bowl,
sweep floors. After, we assembled in ragged lines,
each a team with an animal name, like cubs
or tadpoles. A counselor wearing a whistle on a cord
called out activities: softball, swim...
He'd blow the whistle, and everyone ran to one.
I would turn, walk off into some nearby woods,
lose myself all morning. It's a wonder
no one missed me. At least, no one came looking.
Don't ask what I did. What I remember is the glow—
every moment, leaf and grass blade, every stone,
sunlight scattered among them, patches
of white fire. My heart hummed, more home
lost in woods than I have ever felt—
unless you count the territories of poems
I'm called to write, in which I lose myself,
not unlike the way I wandered those woods.
I might as easily been walking among galaxies,
green distances between leaves endless as stars.
My own certain way—maybe where poetry began
for me, before thinking, before knowing, speechless
in the green world where I wanted to stay.

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