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235 words

Lynx-Sighting

by Tanya E. E. E. Schmid

Its long legs stride across the hillside towards my kitchen, shoulder blades rolling like a well-oiled machine, head low, framed by the broad, feathery collar of its mane. Its eyes stare at the open window where I stare back, unmoving. There is no sound to its steps, but a quickness in the air, as though the wind is holding its breath. The jays in our Douglas fir fall silent.

Its nostrils flare, searching for me. The smell of wild thyme blended with last year's grass escorts the cat like fragrant bouquets strewn at a royal procession, but wild and earthen.

A crow disturbs our mutual reverence with sharp cries. Beneath the windowsill, my hand dares to move, searching for my phone on the table next to me. I reach the cool leather case. My arm raises it slowly, working separate from the rest of my body, my head and torso frozen. Without looking, my finger presses: click. Better a camera than a gun.

The satin eyes turn away and, upon reaching the woods, the lynx sits back on hay-colored haunches and stubby tail, then launches over the 5-foot fence. I stare down at a perfectly preserved encounter on my phone. A sour metallic taste rises in my throat when I realize this photograph is a call to hunters. Not wanting one shot to precipitate a deadlier other, I hit "delete" and close the kitchen window.