

The Tornado is the World

Catherine Pierce

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With crystal, complete sentences of fully developed ideas, Catherine Pierce explores wreckage and destruction, and the sense of surprise one feels after surviving another day of modern existence. The author of two previous collections, Pierce's work has been published in *Boston Review*, *Ploughshares*, *FIELD*, and numerous other journals. She teaches creative writing at Mississippi State University.

Imaginary Vacation Scenario #4

You have a headlamp and a knapsack
of buffalo jerky. You will hike up the dark
mountain into the darker pine, you will pitch
your tent below a sky as thick with stars
as the air is thin. You are the only human
for miles, and this knowledge just makes
your legs stronger, your lungs more capacious.
You know how to skin a rabbit. You know
how to scare off a bear. The sea-level land
you've left behind glows radioactive and wants to know
your mother's maiden name, your preferred
birth control method, your views on organic
milk and GMOs. Here, your brain space is filled
with field knowledge: how to calculate distance
between you and the coyote's mournful yip;
the proper way to eat the pith of fireweed.
You know snakes can still bite hours after
they've died. The animals call and call,
their voices echoing through the rattling aspen.
You don't answer because they're not
calling you. You keep climbing. With each step,
the mountain grows and for this you love it more.
You will never reach the top. There is no top,
it spills upward and out forever. You could
climb forever. You will climb forever.

MATT SUTHERLAND (Winter 2017)

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