

North Cascades

I. *Running at Altitude*

Up this high and working hard,
the capillaries in our lungs
have fattened like a bunch of grapes.
We're spitting nickels all the way
on Hart's Pass, a one-lane
gravel road of unguarded vertigo
to the fire lookout,
as if some violence wanted out of us.

We saw a clear cut earlier.
The smell of fresh felling
sweet and narcotic.
They dragged the pine
from the shape of itself
and pulled it like a puppet
that was suddenly aware
and trying to shake off the master's hand.

II. *On Sourdough*

As the sun slinks behind
Mounts Fury, Terror, Challenger,
headlights move like satellites
orbiting the mountain roads.

We've drunk our hot chocolate
and said goodnight to all of this:
the pain of hiking switchbacks
over six thousand feet,

to the bears whose footprints
surround our muddy tarn
that marinades giardia
from the carcass of a doe.

As God lays a lit match
to the tinderbox of old growth,
Jack glows sinisterly above
Hell's basin. A fierce star rises.