

**What is the Poison Named?**

We are the ones who would  
name it madness.

What light comes out of  
the covered sky that makes  
the pines shine like  
this?—This is what  
we should ask. We should  
tell stories, clear and true  
that equal what we would say,  
but it isn't that simple.

What light makes the trees  
so green on such a dark day?

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Our shoes stick in the mud.  
The red-gold dog runs ahead  
of us, runs behind, his mane  
tangled with needles and cedar  
twigs. Your fingers are cold  
when they touch mine.  
The sky grey through and through.  
As the light thins within the ravine  
the trees lean up the banks  
where they can. Mist collects  
and falls from the tips of  
branches like an offering  
to a thirsting god. It

could be us, we could live  
on this distilled breath  
of fir. The plaid of your  
shirt in front of me takes  
me home, and I recall  
how this morning, not speaking,  
you stretched it over  
your brown shoulders and turned  
away. It isn't much, this  
sharing. We keep walking  
down into the dark ravine  
and I begin to walk slower  
fall behind till I feel  
alone in this thicket and  
it rises so green around  
me, shoots into the sky,  
however grey. Bursting above me.

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Step out, and you're waiting.  
The dog offers us each an  
end of his stick and we take  
it and smile. You think I tell  
this story to create itself. You think  
I say these things to make them  
true.

*Neile Graham*