

Jessica Lynne Henkle

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to the howl

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to the howl
to the bloody-footed march of it
to the bend and writhe and pain of it
to the first taste
to our tongues of muscle
to the hunt in primal forests
to beasts that you unleashed
to the dogs that chase them down
to men and to their guns
to the throbbing, heated pulse of it
to the sins of your flesh
to my sin of the heart
to knowing right from wrong, and changing it
to the blindfolded black of it
to the restless toss and turn
to sweat and sheets and pillows clutched
to the not-enough weight of it
to the deep-chest ache of it
to breaths that won't come
to the gulp of air that comes too soon
to knowing, and never knowing enough

to the brain-wracking angst of it
to the shame of sacred covenants
to confusion
to wandering in the gray, and loving it
to the willing dismissal
to the briar and thistle
to the loud, beating drum of it
to the thrum of the body, and hating it
to rending the heart
to scattering sheep
to the wolf
to the soul-knitting ache of it
to baiting your quarry
to the crosses we carry
to the burden
to boundaries
to the confines of God
to the bone-deep quake of it
to dragging myself out of it
to pulling myself into it
to denial
to the temple of you in the woods
to the worship
to a bullet between the eyes
to the carcass hung and dressed
to the power of it
to the shame of it
to blood on my hands
to the gathering of lambs
to the Shepherd
to being washed clean

to the baptismal pool of it
to the silence
to the skin
to the whisper, wind-swept howl
to the soft, persistent curse of it
to the devil
to the tree I'm pinned against
to the scars on your back and my cries in the night
to praying
to a bark and full-moon braying
to the quiet
to the chasm
to the gap that's formed between us
to the falling
to the catching
to the day of clouds and darkness

Jessica Lynne Henkle has a BA in English and Art History from Boston University and an MFA in Writing from Pacific University. She is a writer, editor, and book reviewer who lives in Portland, Oregon, where she is in the throes of writing a new novel while seeking an agent for her recently completed novel-in-stories.

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