

Pattiann Rogers

This Day, Tomorrow, and the Next

When the blind and the deaf walk
together into the forest, one understands
the blackness of light on a clear day.
The other understands the deep reach
of stillness in a riot of green.

Both alike feel on their faces
the floating threads and tatters
of occasional sun passing through
the canopy of overlapping branches,
close thatch of needles, uneven roof
of broad leaves. And both can name
the fragrances of sweet sap and damp
soil, sodden cones, rain-filled mosses.

But neither encounters the burrow
of the fungus beetle leaving her eggs
in the dank of a fallen fir. Neither
is aware of the yellow of the jewelweed
to come. Neither is aware of the taste
of the salmonberry to be. Neither
imagines those deer made of shadows
who are only known when imagined.

Within their inevitable errors
each regrets, each beholds.
Both put their hands the same
into the snow waters of the creek,
the flow pushing equally against
the pressure of their place.
But only one tilts toward the single
twitch-sluff of ground leaf where
the red newt slides. And only
one of them finds and lifts the red
newt from its rust-red leaf.

Each can hold a river-smooth
rock, feel the circle-leading allure
of its edges, remember by finger
and palm the shape and heft
of before the beginning. Within
their frailties, one fears, one denies.

Yet for a brief moment either
of them might conceive and come

to love that which exists solely
as the possibility of green radiant
variation of fernleaf fronds spreading
over the forest floor, of yellow-
green and black-green fir and cedar,
hemlocks filled with hanging moss
shags, the possibility of a ruffled
spill of lichens, the rip of a steel
blue creek, the chip *zeet* of dipper,
a slow, quiet swing of autumn fog
up the hillside, conceive and love
that possibility alone which attends
steadily without ears and watches
forever without eyes.

The Andrews Forest, October, 2005