

## October Above Trial Lake

*Warren Hatch*

Boo and Yamba climb fast, finding trail in dusk, and I follow on stiffening mud and snowcrust from last week's first snow. They skirt Cliff Lake then Petit, Linear, and so between glacial morains, taciturn boys bewildered by plunging cold and this sudden-setting behavior of water. The lakes bend in each ascending basin, like oil, colorless; their light has drained into sky. Above treeline, a few runt spruce and sparse mountain mahogany.

At the divide, snow glows blue on the highest basin rim where a stone I know sits altar-like between the two Divide lakes. We bivouac, pausing to listen for the dry front rolling up from spruce forests. The boys crouch between those winds and the squeezing funnel of Notch Pass, between fear and exultation. "Going to blow tonight," Boo says. "Yes," I say; then the first gust lifts our tent straight up. We gather it back, tumble in, shape ourselves in an overlapping circle around the innerwall. We sit or lie on our sides levered up on elbows like nomads. Sanctuary. We pray and eat, sop thick stew with sourdough; steam billows between us.

Boo fiddles with the shortwave, catching long bounces across the receding troposphere—Oklahoma City, Lubock, Juarez, Reno, Coeur d'Alene. Yamba reads the Gospel of Luke aloud in counterpoint to wind, reading because their mother taught them, so this brings her closer. And Christmas near;

they're imaginative boys. Peregrines far from home,  
following a star. Boo pauses on each shifting rockabilly,  
mariachi, syndicated-conspiracy-theorist talkshow,  
high-school football station. He drifts  
past Tuba City, that Navajo station  
down south of the four corners. He stops,  
hunts back along the spectrum: that coyote voice.  
The surging chant of dancers following that voice,  
their circling shuffle. As if the walls of the tent were song  
and the wind were dance. As if this moment before Tuba City  
twists away on the drifting troposphere were always here,  
will always be here. Yamba stops reading, says, "I remember  
we sang—"

We've been working toward this place of wind, rock,  
and those coyote voices drifting out of sky. Questions we have  
in the weave of those ancient five-tone songs. We will come here again;  
we will walk east for weeks, down the backbone  
of this country to its far end, hunting.

But tomorrow we will travel on, the intermittent hard-set snow  
keening where we walk. We will lay our fly lines across water,  
and trout will rise to our casts as if flying through amber sky.  
We will sit on the divide rock under wind-clean sky;  
sun will soften snow and mud. The blood of the trout we keep,  
crimson on snow and rock.