Directive

Linda Swanberg
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Her lair: landscape of dark wood
in a ragged season. At night animal eye
and baying of wolf make her brave. Owls glide
to their kill. Near the river’s swollen tongue
moss caves keep her warm. She sees children
bathing in pools. They eat the air. They remain.
Their shrill play lets the hounds loose
under the roar of timber crackling to the ground.
In cellar-holes she finds their abandoned toys.
Head out-of-mind she hears the din
of skillet and spoon. Once upon a time.

She frowns on the shadow of a thorn,
gazes at steel-bright water in the pool—
mirrors of coolness. Coolness of spoons.
With her deep-sea hands she fingers
a stone. It is a bell sharpening
the song of dancing children.

I am hanged by the roots of my hair.”
What nimble terror of play—shadows
carved from bone. And it is too
far to hear the singing.