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White Willow

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White Willow

Within the balm of trees we walked.
 —Nick Keyes

White willow

of ancient Indian basketweavers, of Jim Link, Potawatomi,
 of July windbreaks, of round waterholders,
 of well-destroyers, diviners, of European immigrants

Pliant willow of Swedish moonshiners,

of minnow tank protectors, of sauna switches, of smoked suckers,
 of spawning walleyes, of cleaned blue-lunged smelt

Water willow of tornado shields, of broken bark,

of caterpillar shelters, of goldfinches crying, of cecropia moths,
 of bitching red squirrels, of soon-to-be-shot porcupines

Planted willow of brothers, of tree-climbing Siberian huskies,

of burning moon shadows, of life-and-death struggles,
 of dead raccoons, of stretched-out guts, of empty eye sockets,
 of genital-eating fishers, coyotes, bobcats on the loose

Broken willow of smashed June bugs, of lightning strikes,

of winter freeze-up, of Flicker holes, of blueberry leaves, of feral cats,
 of faded wooden swings, of quiet cancer, of women in handcuffs

Fragrant willow of zealous bees, of evening hens roosting,

of bending deer, or white-tailed ballerinas, of Great Horned Owls' talons

Cracking willow of death songs, of marriage songs, of Ed Gein's corpses,

of noisy divorce, of chalky bones, of collapsing buildings, of dead foxes in
 the grass,

of Belgian horses, Babe and Queen leaving

Pregnant willow, blooming willow, first-kiss willow, dead-elm willow,

evening grosbeak willow, willow of screaming bullets — even dead you
 sprout green,

White willow.

Gennie Nord