

Taylor Graham – Two Poems

Aspen Grove

Somewhere between French Camp
and Tanglefoot, my dog and I started up
the trail, climbing hairpins
through dusty hot – ceanothus, manzanita –
up to a sudden
midst of silent green community.
Family of aspen all of a root,
relations without words.
The language confusing at first.
My dog stopped in the trail,
sniffed breeze, cocked her ears.
Every aspen leaf a-tremble, origami –
if paper could be so delicate.
Skin of paper, as if
someone had written a history of snow
over rock over snow. Center-
piece of one living tree
with so many minds; a net of roots
to hold the mountain together.
Whispers I couldn't quite hear, angels
on the breeze
of a half-moon day. My dog
stood listening. Shiver-cool of noon.

Lizard Karma

Morning's dim and cold as
a winter snake. It's early March –
frost on the grass, ice
on the windshield. Sun-glare coming
up over Stone Mountain. I pull off
the windshield wrap, and out
falls a lizard. It's the wrong season.
What instinct drew him
to yesterday's faded warmth
of my little Honda? Western fence-
lizard: flat skull of hope; blue
on throat and belly – vibrant blue.
My numb fingers tingle
with lizard. I hold him under jacket
and vest, I'll carry him

to the woodpile, where sun strikes
first, this time of year.
Too late. Already he's clasped
my shoulder with tiny lizard claws,
seeking heat. Inevitably
headed for my neck, climbing.
How to untangle a lizard
from collar and hair? How
disengage one life from another?

Taylor Graham is a volunteer search-and-rescue dog handler in the Sierra Nevada. She's included in the anthologies *Villanelles* (Everyman's Library, 2012) and *California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present* (Santa Clara University, 2004). Her book *The Downstairs Dance Floor* was awarded the Robert Phillips Poetry Chapbook Prize. Her latest book is *What the Wind Says* (Lummox Press, 2013), poems about living and working with her canine search partners over the past 40 years.