We walk through the woods thorns scraping, leaving long cuts and you apologize, ask if I want to turn back. I keep on my path, I am discovering as I go. Through the trees is a clearing, a field of tall grasses and prickly plants.

We surrender our naked legs to the unruly meadow where your aunt and uncle spent their wedding night in a bed your father made.

We plod though the brush, this is not easy walking.

We stop halfway to bask in the sunlight, to admire the newly painted reds and golds of autumn to kiss, to breathe for more than sustenance.

We breathe because the crisp air feels so good. We breathe for pleasure.

We arrive on the other side, enter into the woods again and a wide path appears.

This is where you played as a child. You were king of this forest.

It feels different now because I am here? Because you have been beyond these woods? Or because your fondest memories now belong to the meadow.

-Jessica Hatfield