

The Age of Extinction

--Vivian Demuth

A few nights ago, a bear danced around my garden carrots
and bowed to sniff the sow's scat in the soil bed.

Last summer, a deer yanked my Tibetan prayer flags
from firetower scaffolding
and paraded adorned antlers past trampled skulls
in the broken forest.

I am a human animal walking a dirt trail of illusions
tossing vegetable scraps a mile from fire lookout
cabin for the closest or quickest to snack.

In my first six years of fire lookout solitude wrestling
I saw a hungry caribou outrun a wild six-pack
of dartgun helicopters,

I heard ravens chuckle circling above loggers'
orange flagging tape alit in forest flame's,

I followed a scarred moose chase a fleeing Honda generator
along another new mountain road,
and took photos of a wolf pack stealing the seismic camp's
grilling steaks & biting off a page
from the First Handbook of Habitat Protection.

Over the next six years from mountain heights, I've watched
the wildlife thin and the oil drills strike back.

Is this the Age of Extinction in which only Fortune's wheels
will roll on?

Will some drugged grizzly bear wake up and flip the switch?

Can a human ever gain the insight of a drugged bear?

In the meantime, I'll sit in the petrified bedrock
with what looks like a young dinosaur
and write for the unwritten record.