

ANN E. MICHAEL

At a Girl Scout Lodge

I flung my spidery body into New Jersey's
scrub pine forests, acre on acre of trees no taller
than myself, stretching toward sea over

the hidden aquifer whose water I'd
mixed with flavored sugar powder in the lodge kitchen,
the orange beverage a kind of crime against nature.

During the hike I'd struggled to keep up—
lured into lingering by Indian pipe, British soldier moss,
salamander nooks in rotting bark, cedar pools

and after lights-out stared through thin darkness
at the beamed lodge ceiling. I could not sleep,
not because I chattered with the plush row of girls

but because I was wandering past the blazed trails
into that great crowd of trees, my bare feet
sticky with pine tar, gritty in sand, no voices around

save those of little dun-colored birds, wind in needles,
soft, aqueous vibrato in the porous rock layers
above which I floated, ever seaward.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ann E. Michael is the author of *Small Things Rise & Go* (FootHills Publishing 2006), *The Capable Heart* (FootHills Publishing 2011), and *Water-Rites* (Brick Road Poetry Press 2012). Her poems have recently appeared in *Mom Egg Review*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Peacock Journal*, *Antiphon*, and *Prairie Schooner*. She works as a writing coordinator at DeSales University and lives in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley. Online at www.annemichael.wordpress.com

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