

MARTY WILLIAMS

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The Clearing (for My Father)

That year, well before thaw, he cleared  
a path through scrub alder and spruce,  
halted where the slope flattened out,  
drove a stake into the hard ground.

He sunk pilings for a foundation and returned  
to build a cabin on the bog. Alone, foot stopped  
on the shovel, he heard a loon. Knew the raunch  
of bear nearby, outside the circle of light.

Season after season, he left his work in town,  
went there to that clearing. Peeled back the trees  
with his axe, salted the bog with gravel  
from the lakebed. There were summers  
full of sawdust and hammers,  
wheelbarrow handles cleaved to his palm.

Warm in the snug, square cabin he dreamed a garden  
full of flowers and daisies gleamed  
bold and white in the evening. Made a home  
for themselves there. In the face of the mountain,  
on the shore of the lake.

In the afternoon, all wood smoke and gin, he watches  
the young birches grow, block the lake from  
his view. He sits there, still, into evening,  
waiting for the loon or the bear to return.  
Gravel sinks, the woodpile falls out of its rows.  
Trees creep back into the clearing.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Marty Williams is the author of *What to Make of This Bounty* (Thousand Words Press 2012), and her work has also appeared in *Poetry East*, *Digital Paper*, *dcomP magazinE*, *Inquiring Mind*, and the anthology *Winged: New Writing on Bees*. She is a teacher consultant with the Bay Area Writing Project at UC Berkeley and a writing workshop leader for Amherst Writers & Artists. Active with a variety of writing initiatives—including Teachers as Writers, Room to Write, Words for the Good, and WriteEasy—, Marty runs workshops for writers of all ages and coordinates community literary readings. She lives in Oakland, California, and on Kenai Lake in Alaska.

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