

## Rises with the Light

1.

The first time I see her,  
she's pinned to a community board  
on a bright blue flier,  
    holding a puppy,  
a hound of some kind,  
cradled in her arms  
    like someone would hold a newborn,  
and there's something so familiar about her smile  
    that I try to remember her name.

2.

After she's been missing a week,  
there's a lead segment on the news  
about how she disappeared  
while walking in the woods,  
    alone,  
    a hotline for anyone with information,  
her parent's pictures of her,  
    the most recent  
    from a rafting trip with friends,

inner-tubes tied together  
with a rope stripped like a yellow-jacket,  
and she's floating with an open cooler,  
the cheap kind you find at a liquor store,  
that looks like it's yawning. 4

In the final picture,  
she stands on the river's muddy banks,  
hair wet and clumped,  
flexing for the camera,  
as if to say *I'm invincible*.

3.

A few days later,  
just before dawn,  
I fish the edge of a stream  
that runs through the woods she was last seen in,  
the ground blanketed in a patchwork of dead and dried leaves.  
I worry I'll step in a snake hole  
or a bear-trap, jaws open and awaiting,  
or worse. What if I'm the one who finds her?

*He came upon the body while fishing*

Maybe no one will find her.

There's still hope after all,  
rumors that she's lost,  
run away, dropped out, flown off on wax wings.

4.

There's a midnight vigil in the courtyard,  
everyone from town, and even some from few over,  
pray together, kneeling, murmuring, even crying.

They've posted more pictures  
around on the pillars, lamp-posts,  
and shop-windows, but still—

A girl with an aquiline nose  
is handing out candles.

She's got gazelle-like long legs

and at the top of them,  
near the frayed ends of her cutoffs,  
are two white crescents

where the sun hasn't touched her skin.

I take a candle and the girl smiles back at me,  
somber and sincere and honest.

They're lining the walkways of the campus,  
as if they expect to somehow lead her home,  
and I can't help but wonder if the candles are bright enough  
to tan those tiny half-moons.

5.

Through news reports, internet posts,  
rumors at work and school,  
I've come to know this missing girl more intimately  
than I've known some girlfriends.

I know that she is a freshman from Fox River Grove  
studying art, that she frequented woods and walking-trails—  
her favorite places to take photographs,

some of which inspired her paintings—  
that she worked in dull oil paints,  
that she liked Curtis Mayfield and Otis Redding,

and I imagine that we will get along when we meet,  
that we'll go to dinner and talk about passions, goals,  
places we've been, and places we plan to visit.

We'll stay in the restaurant, past close,  
until our server comes and kicks us out,  
and even then we'll linger in the parking lot.

6.

Someone finds a body.

7.

I imagine the dogs sniffing her out,  
buried beneath leaves,  
hair matted and muddied,  
clothes frayed and tattered,  
wrists tied together with a black and yellow cord,  
her face bruised cornflower blue.  
This time there is no god in the machine,  
no cable descending from heaven,  
nothing but the patch of dirty earth  
where she was dumped  
and the next morning's sunrise,  
melting what's left of the remaining wax.