

## **Together**

I know where you were conceived.  
It was a foggy November afternoon  
when I dodged drippy hemlock branches,  
stepped quietly over sphagnum mounds,  
and ducked behind a streamside tree  
to watch two dull gray fusiform shapes  
dance in tandem over a shallow gravel bed.  
I have slid my stomach over the smooth stones,  
dived below the turbulence, hid behind boulders,  
let the current carry me downstream.

You swam to the lake after your first year.  
I have lain in the meadow above the lake,  
watched mayflies emerge in the evening.  
I have swum far, treaded water at dawn,  
wished for gills to meet you below the thermocline.  
Were you nearby that October evening,  
when the lake reflected the sunset and twilight  
and a quartet of loons cried as the moon rose?  
Or when I raced the northwest wind across the lake,  
on ice skates, after the December freeze,  
and peered below the black ice hoping to see you?

Pumpkins turning orange,  
hands warmed with morning coffee,  
freshly split oak stacked against the foundation,  
wood smoke on blustery afternoons:  
signs that you will soon return.  
Molecules, magnetism, moon, and stars  
lead you back to the stream in the forest,  
to dart among the riffles and ascend the falls,  
to continue the cycle as your ancestors did.  
The forest drops red and yellow confetti,  
rejoicing in your rite of fall.  
I will hike to the place by flashlight,  
stand among the swirls and eddies,  
cast a Gray Ghost into the dark water,  
and, with you, mark the passing of another year.

-Ethan Nedeau, 2005