

Stephen Cushman

Bury a Body on Private Land

and you should draw a map of the site
and file it with the property deed
so the place will be clear to others to come
as it won't be in this case in two or three summers,
no casket or stone but just her soft mound
in the woods on a ridge above a thin creek
she studied through moods and most kinds of weather
as though she's snuggled under a quilt
in fetal position, her hip the high point.

Death Canyon Picnic

From where the road ends walk west to junction and take the left fork. Wind through thin pine, twisted, contorted, to subalpine fir, eventual spruce. Leave behind forest to climb the moraine through meadow to overlook to savor fine views of valley below, parallel peaks, mouth of the canyon. Continue through meadow, sage-covered, sloping, then groves of cottonwood. Head for the portals guarding the canyon, and enter the canyon through narrow notch. Gain elevation up the north side. Stay to the right of cascading creek past thrust formations under sheer walls. After the switchbacks with vistas of valley to snow-summits opposite canyon levels out and walls slowly widen to classic U-shape gouged by the glaciers. Granite slabs here are oldest in the range. Follow meandering, willow-lined stream, keeping an eye out for moose on the banks. For behemoth. Leviathan. This is the spot to turn and return, though no one ever has. Distance: Sufficient. Time: It depends. Difficulty: Tough, too tough to say. Easy for some, very easy, moderate, then there are those for whom it gets strenuous, slightly or somewhat, even extremely hardly unheard of. Drink lots of water. Not that it matters.

Frailty Syndrome

Sarcopenia sounds sort of dirty
but merely means poverty
in net worth of flesh,
muscle mass loss after age fifty,
perfectly natural, par for the course
if you make it that far.

Make it that far
and chances increase you'll hear of the flesh
as something like grass that wizens and wanes
or as the weak runt flummoxing spirit,
a place to stick pins to keep down elation;

yet a place to stick pins to keep down elation
needn't be bad or an object of hate,
not in a bison rolling in dust, alone on the plain
Monday first light, two thousand pounds
rising to profile, Here's a clear view
of all my endowments to go with fair warning

to get along now, keep moving, keep moving
in love with my flesh, not to eat but to touch
with long-distance fingers, handle me and see
you're filthy rich, my flesh is yours,
let's put some meat on the bare bones you pick.