

In the Briars

Colleen McKee

As I walked to Lake Divine, I remembered I'd forgotten
To fill my pockets with rocks. I'm the type who forgets

Nearly everything, except for the things I would like
To forget. I realized I'd left the rocks in the house,

And my keys as well, or rather, I thought I'd no need
For my keys, never intending to return. I know there are stones

By the lake, but nothing you'd want near your skin—
Slimy and smelling of fish. And I'd already weighed

The stones back at home, according to the figures
In anatomy books, weighed against the estimated

Pounds of my lungs, those gleaming
Gray cats, curled up in fear

Round my heart. I felt sorry then,
If not for myself, for my innocent organs,

Who continued to contract and expand
In unceasing devotion to me.

There was nothing in my pocket
But lint. I tossed it in the lake,

Turned round on the path, toward the house
I was now locked out of. I walked

Past Coke cans, clover, briars, old condoms,
There were ticks in my socks

And mosquitoes in the grass.
They rose at each step,

Formed a bright constellation
Of bites at each knee,

So I would remember
I was alive.

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