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Cradle

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Cradle

Like quavering flames
in a dying campfire,
the maples on the ridgeline
fly their last golden banners while
Dan Harlow rests in a tree stand,
a borrowed rifle across his lap,
the scarf that Laura knit hugging
his cheeks, cap snuggled low,
thumb tucked in a paperback,
bullets nestled in his pocket.
A busy squirrel navigates
the branches above him.
A doe and her fawn, spots fading,
sift through the forest litter just
a stone's throw up the hillside.
The simmer of moldering leaves
is the only sound in his ears.
Not dreaming, not thinking, he pictures
a grave slab long-forgotten in a grove;
a tree's roots have pried open
the sleeper's box. Through the years
its fingers have sundered the bones,
the eager tongues relishing every pasty
smear of marrow to feed each stretch
of its climb into the swiveling heavens.

-Andrew Vogel
Kutztown, PA