

Walking the labyrinth

by [Katherine J. Williams](#) in the [June 16, 2021](#) issue

I don't know where the mind goes or how it keeps time—
the icy lichen on the bark over there can seduce me
even as I'm floating up to the dark bird at the top
of the live oak and looking down at poor earthbound me,
stepping over scat fresh on the path since yesterday.

This morning I feel alone and small—shrunken,
full of porous bone. I miss those inches I've lost.
To the east, the tick-ridden deer on the hill are silhouettes,
majestic and black. The doe reaches down to the fawn.

Step and step, breath, then breath, and I turn in to the center—
ring, note, tiny cairn, scattered chips of blue stone. I don't know
how this happens—I'm standing, arms out, grateful
for centuries of talismans, intimate continents of things—
and then I remember what I said this morning to someone
who called me by the wrong name. No matter, is what I said,
I answer to anything. But this is a lie. The universe,
its elements and its people, has called to me
and I've turned away.

I stay still, here, for a while
until my feet begin to follow the path. I notice her
as I turn west—lean and dark, her pace matches mine.
I look for her each time I round the curve by the fallen tree, know
she's behind me as I look toward the lake the fog has made
of the valley this morning. As I reach the end of the walk,
I raise my arms and she raises hers—
stretching from my feet all the way up the hill.