

After Walking Too Close to the Woods at Midnight
by Traci Matlock

1

Not if the figure is hiding but when will she strike.

I bought a pair of anonymous gloves at the corner store last night:
my fingers slipped in unsure up to the knuckle first, then so easy the whole hand
thrust into the white cotton interior.

Like the time I sucked a peach pit

and inadvertently
swallowed it. Startling, really, how quickly what is foreign
becomes familiar inside a body

how if you swallow a stone you can trace the path it takes in you
as if pushing the stone through dirt with one finger

then, suddenly, it is lost, pushed too deep in the ground
to be recognized as ground or not ground
as stone, not stone,
pit, not pit,
as you.

2

Sometimes I stand with my back to the blackest hole in the line-up of trees

hoping for it, swelling already in anticipation
of attack, overcome by nothing

as great as my desire
for loneliness, or

as great as my desire for lust so thick it is conflagration
it is fist after fistful of hair
the body turning red

everywhere it's not
being pressed, held
down or pushed back

6

I cannot be the only one
to find someone else's chewing gum on the tree trunk and,
forgive me,
chew it.