

THE OLD WOODS

PETER SEARS

As a kid I learn the woods are spooked, so when I go in,
I make piles of pinecones, cake them with mud,
and place them through the woods.
I'm small. Small is good for hiding. I walk
in the woods, too – I wait to feel something watching me,
maybe even following me,
to scare me, to see if I spook and run.

What I like to do is step off the trail into the underbrush, wait,
covered up like a bush ball, and see what comes by
and where I might be
if I was still walking. I might catch sight of the dead
and spook around them,
slip up behind one of them, and make him flutter
and get caught in the branches and tear himself.

I dream of being in the woods again with the dead and the owls
and my pinecones. Then I lose the dream.

I wait for it to come back to me as if I have gone ahead
and have to wait for myself to catch up.

Days later, I wake early. Light is coming up,
I watch it rise behind the trees.

This is before dogs and cats and kids,
before anything looks like anything I can trust. It's so early

turkeys are floating down in the dark
from the trees where they sleep.
They don't fly down, they drop,
slowly, like tents swaying, a half dozen of them
pecking the ground and another half dozen
standing in the middle of the street, twitching their heads.