

SEED TICK: A PALIMPSEST

**CLAYTON
CLARK**

Our state issued a policy of executing inmates
with straight pentobarbital, same as vets
put down sick dogs. Unable to keep oxygenated
blood in its brain, our dog would pass out
from excitement, the vet blaming these anoxic
events on nodes that mushroomed from each
failing organ. To the end I'd like to remain
useful to you, but given my family history
of apoplexy, let's not count on it. If when
you can no longer see my name in this body
they still won't let a person choose his end,
please leave me. It's the time of year
for accidental deaths. A boy drowned last summer,
and boaters found his body surfaced miles
downriver. The parents tried to donate his organs
and tissues, but waterlogged cells are helpful
to no one. So give what you can then burn
me down and dump the dust into a river
because you know how much I've tried to be
everything to everyone. Remember the time
we saw a bull elk ahead on the hiking path?

You dashed downhill, and I followed you across
the bottoms to a riverbank. Crouched among
sawtoothed boulders, we listened through the water
roiling behind us, but all that ever tried to hurt us
were seed ticks we found crawling up our shoes,
heedless of the poison we'd sprayed on our legs.