

## **Unredacted**

I'm here to lose the sound of oversized pickup trucks and Friday night revelers, and trade it for the sound of water on three sides. I'm here to test my courage, an activity that's taking up more and more of my time as the birthdays pile up and start to look like this carpet of sea stones under my boots. I'm here to see what I can pull out of my hat when I need to. I'm here to see how many of the words I scribble this weekend remain on the page, versus how many of my pages end up looking like a top secret government document that's just been released to the media. I'm here to escape electronics, and imagine myself as I was in one of my earlier incarnations, when tides and moon phases determined my mood and what I did with my day. I'm here to find a part of myself that has been lost in modern preoccupation for far too long.

## **They Insist**

I love my bed. It's the first night of the retreat and I miss it already. Encased in my mummy bag on a too-narrow air mattress, I see that I have no choice but to stay completely immobile, and this will be like trying to sleep in a bobsled. I comment to my roommate that, being frozen in this tin soldier position with the plywood underbelly of the upper bunk so close overhead, I feel as though I'm headed into kind of a rustic MRI, maybe the kind they use in the Yukon Territories. Pay attention to your dreams and wake up by 8:00, I tell myself. Instead, I wake up as I do so often now, at the big gorilla hand of a giant pile of words, half in and half out until I commit them to paper. Even though they can clearly see that I'm in this body cast, they won't wait, so I fumble for the notebook, and uncap the pen, and try to position my hand on the page, in total darkness, hoping that I'm not writing over something I already wrote. This bully keeps shaking me awake until I've lost the pen cap and probably awakened my roommate a few times despite valiant efforts to avoid that, but I think I've quelled this assault for tonight, and can finally close my eyes now, the only body part I can move in this damned sleeping bag.