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BACKCOUNTRY

by **Amber Watson**

I don't remember the cat pouncing from its place on top of a rock, or knocking me from my skis. I don't remember the twist of my wrist around my pole, snapping tendons and popping bones. I don't remember being pawed to the ground, only being carried, by my shoulder and head, in his massive jaws, between his teeth. I couldn't feel anything but the labored tug about my shoulders, the dead drag of my legs across the snow. But what I can tell you is this: Mountain Lion breath smells like damp leaves. The backs of Mountain Lion teeth are dirty white and look like a mountain ridge or like solitude. And a Mountain Lion's lolling tongue feels almost like a caress when upon my hair it would press and rest. There was no heroic struggle; I don't even know if I screamed. But once or twice, while being dragged from the trail, my foot would catch on what I could only imagine was one of my skis, still ridiculously clamped to the bottom of my boot.