

**RICHARD MILES**

**The Second Time**

**1**

You awake  
panther tracks around your head  
cave entrance  
black wick of burning candle

thing not yet language  
approaches on the path

**2**

eight times through the crystal  
a drop of water inside  
the oldest on earth  
turning in sunlight

below a mountain drying  
and a single bird

the fourth time  
you rounded up wild bees  
rolled them into the yard like a hoop  
for the dogs to leap through  
climbed into the fur  
of lawn

when you had bagsful of sand  
you walked away  
scattering the sand as a road

white bandage  
wrapping your eyes

**3**

nights you fall  
asleep on your eyes

they lift the cover  
to find you  
plant an oak  
in your chest

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whatever words they stitch  
to your thumbs or feet  
do not find you

they must let  
croon of summer frogs  
condense on their brows in sleep  
wipe you from their eyelids  
in the morning

**4**

when you extend your hand  
a window stops it  
you hear apples rolling on the floor above

there is something over the doorway  
that keeps you  
from walking through

what's in the next room  
you stare until it moves

go outside  
stretch arms high in the night  
toward sprays of stars  
reaching back through cells  
silence buoys the trance

you must hold  
until there is something  
to hold

**5**

your name  
there in the wind

6

when the river widens and slows  
anything might happen

bird alights on a treetop  
freezes  
its motion permanent and

rubbed off by a bee's foot

7

catch a big fish  
toss it in a sack  
haul it over the road

the ocean  
ends in each hand  
fish

crying take me home  
between apple trees  
across a stream  
rain on glass door  
mirrors their silver waters

curtain of steam  
pond of faces

8

at first you thought it was the second time  
you walked  
between these white trees  
in sight of signal sheep  
wilting on the hillside

glowing mountains  
more a gold mist  
than land

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when did clouds mutter in breeze  
like water-lapped scows  
when did the banner of birds  
split apart like a line of weeds on a beach

it must be the second time  
because you know where to go

to rest and drink  
earth smells come back

but nothing seems to know you  
except the sheep

fixed in stone  
their glance a footprint  
on your face