

Every time the refrigerator opens I see the berries, black as bears, their eyes shining. Their voices a low crescendo that climbs every day. They sing to me of hiding under the green fingers of leaves, growing darker and darker, listening to cars chuff by. When I grow old I'll be a blackberry, wizened into a bobbled tooth of sweet hot sun.

I drive off the road every time I see them, and they are everywhere, like swallows, in an Oregon summer. The very last berries are dropping off bushes under the eaves of the Wave Crest Hotel, in the air of salt brine and fog, bushes that grow like big men with bristling hands. I passed their white flowers that rippled like butterflies, and their light perfume in June, when my legs had begun to turn a nut brown and my walk had slowed with the beginning of summer. The road was filled with blackberry bushes, gathering force. People walked out to the volcanic far-off castles that stand in the waves. I walked forever, breathing in the bushes and the soft, ocean air, I did not tire, the waves kept returning. This is how the berries grow and grow.

They spring out from cliffs, in thick forests, in shallow gullies along highways, in supermarket parking lots. They fell apart in our fingers, and we ate them in the car until our chins dripped. Warm, and sweeter than sugar. We scrubbed the purple juice from the seats, and I promised everyone jam.

These berries will only last only another day or two. But blackberries are ancient. The first waves that rubbed bits of sediment from rock glimmered with specks of pleasure that ripened into seeds that floated on air, were stroked by light, and were sucked back and forth by waves until they began singing.

In that great singing of the green world, a spontaneous joy flowed from the heart of the plants, and remembering the dust of stars they flowered and gave birth to the effulgent, black fruit. As black as cormorants. As deep as space. What could be more wild than the very reaches of what we do not know, that reaches us when we snake our hands past the stinging thorns and find the fruit, softer than our own skin, and we stand at the ends of roads on the tops of mountains, watching the red sun drop?

I take out the bowl and turn off the kitchen light. It's too hot in the house. Julian! Lilly! Gary! Come on out here. Let's be bears. Let's sit on the porch and eat blackberries until it's night. Until our chins are purple and our tongues are black, and we've swallowed summer.