

SEAN PRENTISS

Hitch

This is the woods we're talking about; this is spike. Waking
In backcountry tents that wear the reek of unwashed
Grime that follows us like a languid, vaporous
Shadow. A black-sky breakfast: fists of cereal
Followed by the grit & clump of powdered milk.
The long hike: hoes dangling from morning arms,
Saw packs burning into sun-licked shoulders, legs
Waking slower than that sluggishly ascending sun
To the project site, which is little more than trail's
End. Working by sun-up: razoring a thin trail out of
The tangle of underbrush or the crag of talus until
It's a ribbon leading us deeper to some new world.

This world of work is a new world, a genesis world unlike
All the rest you've lived, & you've lived so many.
But not one like this. Muscles: spend each day
Swinging a tool until those muscles—muscles you
Never even believed in—radiate a throbbing
You've knew known. Fatigue: rivers deeper than to
The bone, a dense cloud, a heavy veil, an anvil tied
To the waist. Endings: labor & slog all day in the
Dust of dirt until the loud call of *Tool count*, that
Gathering, a reunion, of the Pulaskis, the cross cuts,
The hoes, the McLeod's, those primitive angels.
Then the afternoon wearied trail-stumble home.