

C. Ann Kodra

Dowsing

My father's father knew
how to dream water, how
to cant the forked stick,
witness its tilt over
earth stitched with cool,
coursing veins. Arm of his
art, the branch would twitch.
*Roy's the man you want
for dowsing*, other men
would say. A man who
couldn't recite the alphabet
or save a dollar to save
his farm, but knew something
others didn't, held a secret
even his deepest thoughts
couldn't sound. Was the magic
in the stick, the hand that tipped
it, or the thirsty heart roaming
the fields, ever seeking
a drink of pure conviction?
A dug well offered proof,
a mountain man's redemption,
so he wielded shovel, too,
like a needle angled to mine
subterranean blood.
And when at the bottom
he finally tapped the lode
divining rod and fey
DNA had rooted out, when
the last gouge of metal scoop
loosed a gush of muddy water,

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he clambered up, swinging
his body side to side, hands
on rope, boots pressed against
dirt walls crafted only hours
before, heaved the shovel
overhead with bellowed
warning, hoisted himself
toward the vast lip of land,
the swell of voices, the long
draught of worth his parched
brain had sought, the other
men—faces lit by sun—bending
beside the new well, warbling
chorus of liquid sap
rushing into its new, steep
stem, rising, deepening
even as they offered hands
to pull him onto higher ground.