

ODE TO THE BEAVER'S TOENAIL

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What could be more beautiful than a beaver's toenail? Specifically
the second toe from the outside, a webbed marvel where not one but two keratin

crests meet like a blue moon in a month, let's say September,
the month you stood in canyon sand making an echo touch the wall

under stars that sprayed the sky like an animal's back slicked
to bright points. You could barely oar. You had to be taught to trust

your body, its alignment. This was the canyon where, after an absence
of beavers, it was decided by whoever decides these things that

they would be parachuted in, which was done, releasing the beavers
by plane—you imagine it: not dropping but being dropped, how

in a time like that, a toe with two toenails touching could be a comfort.
You couldn't control your path, but you could imagine your body

was your tool. But you had to be taught to read water, to catch
your line. And the beaver's double nail was best suited for waterproofing

the coats of other beavers, particularly good at loosing
stars from the slick constellations of their backs—

I'm saying it was an adaptation that was best suited for one another.