

i was inches from the machine, all i could see now was the one individual sawblade whirring at a hundred thousand revolutions per minute, and its sound filled my head like an empty cavern and the heat from its violence on my skin felt forbidden and exciting. i could feel on my back the hand shoving me forward but something inside me resisted. my muscles tensed, my tendons pulled taut like bungee cords, i felt my feet rooted to the ground and saw legions of the pines i grew up near, no longer noble and tall but burned and mutilated and butchered and i saw people, and so much blood, and their screaming smothered the screaming of the machine in my head and all i could see was the face of the dead child, eyes wide and glassy, and the farmer whose brains had been splattered out of his head. sickening fumes filled my nose and i began to retch and i thought i would die, i thought this is it, i can't resist anymore; and then all at once it stopped, like the heavens had erased a storm from the summer sky, and now i could breathe and i pulled back from the machine and cool air filled my lungs and saltwater rushed over my body and i looked down at my knuckles, bloodied, and all at once my skin slick i clenched my fists and reared back and sent my hands plummeting into the depths of the great machine, and as the gears and blades sheared the skin off my arms and splintered the bones of my body into puzzle piece fragments i refused to look away -- i felt only peace, a great peace, from resolve deep inside my heart that i did not know i had.