

Hands & Fingers

Sean Prentiss

In the black of dawn-night, stir oatmeal on the two-burner.
Spoon brown-sugar-sweet oatmeal to chapped & hungry lips.

Just after dawn, in the earliest hours of work, jam hands into soil.
Yank—& yank again—until the tree root snaps in half in your hands.

Wrap your fingers around the curved wooden handle of a Pulaski.
Feel the echo of the steel head bite into bark & cork & sapwood.

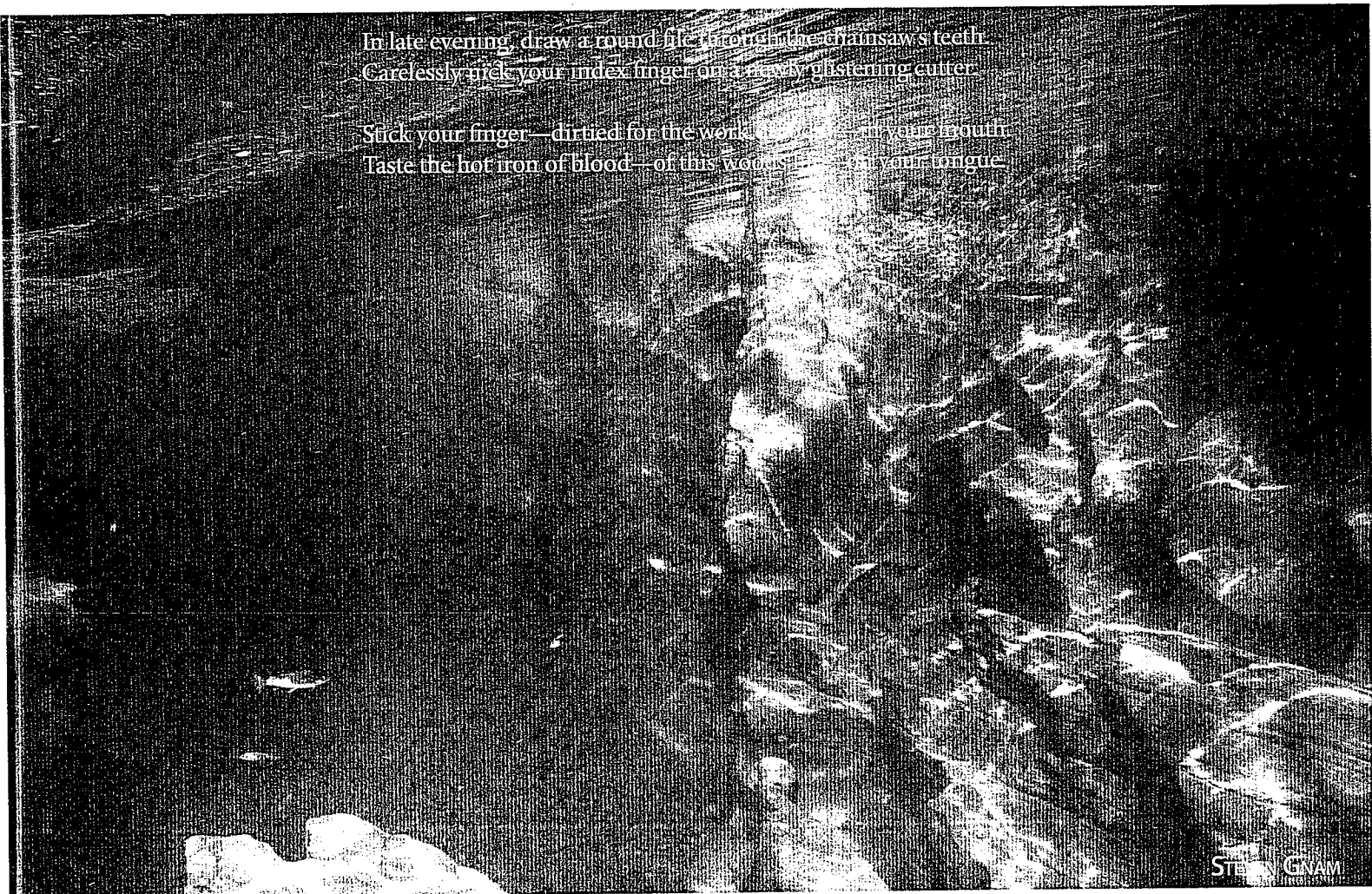
Noon, ache back into the cutbank of the trail, a sandwich in dirty hands.
A meal of cheap meat, commodity cheese, white bread, mineral soil.

After nine hours, walk home with the chainsaw stinging into shoulder.
Your palm rests on the hot bar, feeling the nibble of the cutters.

After work, draw a bastard file across the Pulaski's nicked blade.
The metal shavings sprinkle like today's rain—a shimmering mist.

During a campfire dinner, count the cuts & scabs on each hand.
Six on the right, four on the left—two ooze pus, the rest scabbed.

In late evening, draw a round file to smooth the chainsaw's teeth.
Carelessly nick your index finger on a newly-glistening cutter.
Stick your finger—dirtied for the work of a week—in your mouth.
Taste the hot iron of blood—of this work—on your tongue.



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