

The Collective Nora began next to the boyscouts. ALWAYS.

The Collective Nora began with stones, flat and round and zebra patterns on the water.

Some of them knew exactly where we were going and some were delighted not to know.

Some of them looked at maps and saw many dimensions. Saw the water as the boundaries and as the way to follow the land from high to low.

As they walked along the oak stretches with scratchy grasses, some of them saw the water where the water wasn't obviously visible, saw it in the crevices of the hill folds, saw where its trickles turned to streams, where the streams met more streams, saw the junctions and the way it followed the spread of the space and routed the trails.

And as they walked, some of them felt their legs when they were walking here years ago with a former lover. And some of them felt their legs when they were walking here years ago when they were contemplating going on a big trip with a prestigious government grant.

Some of them felt their legs when they were walking together with some of them many years ago in another state, on another fold of land far away though also along a creek that opened up to big cloudy skies at dusk, that was dry and scrubby and boasted the gold of autumn and crisp dry air.

Some of them felt their legs when they were walking together along a stream this summer, in a lush fold of the Cascades where ferns grew decadently and wood rotted sweetly, lifting their legs over logs and scrambling like mountain goats along the narrow hillside trail, going to a waterfall that some of them had been going to for years, where they said there were fairies, where many members of the Collective Nora had now swam.

As they walked along the oak stretches in the lemon afternoon light they felt the excitement of the swimming hole up ahead and felt the comfort from the summer before, when some of them were hiking a very long trail and it would often get very hot and they were hobbling in pain and the immersion in the icy cold water would be the best relief of the day.

\*

For some of them, this was the most challenging weekend they had ever had.

For some of them, this was the farthest they had ever walked.

\*

The Collective Nora feels  
adversity is impermanent

The Collective Nora feels  
agile

The Collective Nora feels  
alert

The Collective Nora feels  
appreciation

The Collective Nora feels  
blessed

The Collective Nora feels  
consensual isn't mutual

The Collective Nora feels  
easy  
enamored of itself  
feelings  
hella 90s, seeing in the wolf.  
honest  
honored  
in the down low  
ironic about 2nd wave feminism  
low key  
low pressure  
many voices  
mutual love and respect

oscillating between introversion and rebel yelling  
overwhelmed  
poison oak on their face  
safe and warm  
smooth  
stress-free  
the soft curve of the face spoon  
there is never enough salt. Fancy salts  
topically specific and viscerally broad  
trust

The Collective Nora feels feelings

Some of them were excited to be on a trip together and be supportive. Some of them were excited to get high as soon as possible, to laugh and cover each others heads and so all of them formed a supportive ring to block the wind.

Rings like this, of the supportive type that blocked adversity with bodies and meant putting arms around each other and huddling close for warmth and encouragement, rings like these formed all weekend. They became the basis for jokes and not-jokes, for genuine caring and deflecting laughter. “who has the parmesan? can you pass the parmesan? who wants the parmesan? did you get the parmesan? whose bowl needs a scoop? did you get kale? who wants more wine? where’s a fork? who needs a fork? anyone want more?”

Some of them made jokes about it and others took it very seriously. some of them were high-pitched with their nerves and this made some of them nervous, on edge and anxious, so they told them and they thanked them for telling them and then some of them reflected if they had made more parts of them nervous and when would they know? How could they change? How could they be more caring? what wounds had they pressed and not knitted to a scar?

The Collective Nora who feels feelings

The Collective Nora who  
is 11 shades of the same balanced creature

The Collective Nora who  
always champions adversity with grace and panache

who  
is attentive to the needs of all its members, their surroundings

who  
comes together

who  
is Damiana... who cures all ills but cannot diagnose. Do not put all pressure on the CN.

The Collective Nora  
who is evolved  
who is full of life  
who is going with it

who is Greg Kinnear's item of desire. He's bland, but some of CN are into it.  
who is intrepid and vulnerable  
kale worshippers  
kind  
masculine and feminine

For some of them, this was the first time that they had camped with all females. Without adventure bro's.

For some of them it was their first time backpacking, or their first time camping.

For some of them they had done this many times before and it was their favorite thing and they were excited that it was bigger this time, that there were so many firsts and so much talk about seconds.

For some of them, it was exciting to give this trip a name, the Collective Nora, the name that they all slipped into and felt stretchy and smooth around them, like an amorphously shaped tent of brightly-colored spandex, that they could press their bodies into and make a larger unusual shape out of, or huddle in the middle of and not be noticed.

Some of them had named themselves before—  
when they had been a Many-Headed Monster;  
when many of some of them managed a coffee shop together and there were lots of incarnations of vaginas;  
when they had traveled in a car together moving to a new part of the country, drinking canned beers in the backseat and talking in dialects that they couldn't shake;  
when they had been part of a Feminist Utopia that ended with a baja-boy contest, that traveled in a genderless van and woke some of them with a flaming birthday candle and traded grilled sandwiches for coconut rum drinks, that took many polaroid pictures and divided them equally at the end of the trip;  
for some of them, to be in this large a Collective, it felt like a coven.

The Collective Nora  
appreciates moss

The Collective Nora  
nurtures but is bad-ass

The Collective Nora is  
PMSing right now  
is  
feral and wants to share  
predictable but unexpected  
processing  
rebels, radical herbalists and karaoke goddesses  
shared vision  
strong  
superbly supportive but not cheesily so  
the thing that we all have inside  
trusting  
trying to communicate lovingly  
unique beauties  
versions of itself  
witches and the general  
working through ego

The Collective Nora says, "That's good."

The Collective Nora is women's bodies and trans' bodies and is mostly white. The Collective Nora is so gay, is such a lesbian, and is queer and a femme tomboy, and is "straight and feminist" and is in long-term relationships with a few men, and at last is ready to date again. The Collective Nora is able-bodied but also figuring out what "strong feels like." The Collective Nora has had addictions and has hurt themselves and has blacked out and feels so many feelings. The Collective Nora has lots of divorced parents and some that are still together and some that never were.

The Collectice Nora says  
I need this, do you need that?

The Collective Nora says  
*I-EEEE-I-EEEE--AWOOOOO!*

The Collective Nora says  
mind things shouldn't stay in the mind...SPEAKKKKK  
says "No thank you" to the trail.  
thanks

that's good.

The Collective Nora appreciated how hiking grounded their thoughts so that their mind could race but it always had to loop back into what was happening in their thighs as they hiked up a carnival-vertical wall and questioned their perpendicular perception. Some of them thought it was awful, omg so hard. Some chattered. Some just held their hands to their straps, elbows out, head bowed and continued trucking. Some were so proud! The Collective Nora was being clarified.

The Collective Nora sang really choppy and badly tuned acapella versions of pop songs. The CN readily mashed up similar tunes and singers. One of the last diva song masterpieces was sang on a back porch over mugs of tea and smokes at the end of the trip: "Without You" by LeAnn Rhimes and "It's All Comin Back to Me" by Celine Dion and "I Would Do Anything for Love" by Meatloaf, segueing into "Unbreak My Heart" by Toni Braxton. Many epic songs with epicly empty mansions and rainstorms, motorcycles, ruffles and satiny slips.

The Collective Nora creates a tone deaf chorus.

The Collective Nora salivates.

The Collective Nora has hooves and sometimes no feet at all.

The Collective Nora knows lots of cultural references and uses them well.

The Collective Nora moves their bowels at different speeds.

The Collective Nora reads aloud.

The Collective Nora has deep memory. The Collective Nora sometimes talked about relationships and also didn't talk about them; brought them up as jokes or troubles or context or as a story or preferred not to go there.

The Collective Nora had conversations about switching genitalia and what that would do and why and for how long; would they be the person who had always had those parts or would they be "me with that part for a day." Would Collective Nora want to sleep with friends again or more? Meaning, would they sleep with each other more? Sometimes these conversations felt troubling or awkwardly coming from-but-not-acknowledging intra-Collective-Nora sex, which was part of Collective Nora but not the Many-Headed Monster, not part of the Feminist Utopia. Which was one of the ways that CN was more queer than previous groupings of bodies as we got older and our relationships became more layered, lovely, as our genders shifted and our sexualities unfolded, as the Collective Nora was numerically larger than the feminist planes that preceded it.

Some of the Collective Nora felt BLAH BLAH BLAH the words were just coming out of their mouth. And they were just saying shit to say shit and then they had to retreat into silence. Because they still weren't saying aloud the sex within Collective Nora.

Sure I've thought about having a penis but i dont care about it that much. It is not something i am attached to!

But what if your friends want to sleep with you?!

The Collective Nora felt group sensitivity. Some parts felt sensitive to usual group dynamics. Some of the CN were PMSing and felt hypersensitive.

They were silently acknowledging and not acknowledging having sex with each other or wanting to. They were silently acknowledging or not acknowledging what was silent.

Some parts of the CN felt squawks most strongly and some felt silences. There were lots of feelings that went unsaid.

Some of the Collective Nora couldn't talk. Felt triggered, shocked. Didn't want to have to say anything. Some of the CN felt the trigger but not in the narrative they wove of their singular body. Or it was in the bumps and roughnesses they knew were there but society never compelled them to hurdle over. They felt the cold barrel in the silent neck of some of the beloveds near them and its coldness also clamped their own throat. Some of them didn't know how to defuse the air without turning on a spotlight. So far the Collective Nora had only practiced how to dance like a diva in the spotlight, not how to talk about future scars or desired ones.

A few times the spotlight swung on the herstory of a name and it made some of them squirm and try to de-narrate the investigation. Luckily, intentionally, the CN was easy-going and all coming from well-meaning, so to fly out of a series of questions on the trail just took a quick flit of a sea horse tail and soon the male was carrying the baby and they all coo'ed in appreciation together at this natural sweetness as the sea horse fluttered aqueously "backward."

Some of them talked a lot from the pronoun "I," but still felt self-conscious that some of them were doing so much talking and some of them were silent.

of feeling the absences of voices  
of feeling over vocacious  
over bodacious  
piling into so many voices  
and hearing the lack of voice echoing

of also having nothing to say from the I  
so being quiet  
because all of we had a whole thing in our head and part of feeling hypersensitive  
was holding the all of we and threading out along the line of "I", realizing that it  
dissolved before they cared to grasp it aloud.

oscillating between i and we

knitting loops of conversation eagerly tying needs and insecurities,

affirming passing ills and pressing the immediate wounds.  
filling the belly, stitching slowly and looping the skin to tender scar

Some of them had spirit animals. Some of their spirit animals were a sensitive sea horse, some of them were a bee or a lion, some of them were whatever animal they had most recently encountered. Some of their spirit animals were their vagina, some of them were silent on the topic. Some of them identified that their spirit animal were a creature that they most felt akin to, that their male friend had named and they passionately agreed with. Some of them felt that identifying with a spirit animal was a wierd and sad version of white appropriation and spiritual lostness, a constant piling on of spiritual meanings that never netted into something that made sense or was connective. Some of them had tattoos of animals or wanted to get tattoos, but these tattoos didn't mean that they were netting spiritual meaning.

The Collective Nora haltingly turned fear to center, haltingly to love, haltingly fear to leadership, haltingly to support, to competence.

In the Collective Nora even getting dressed could be a shared decision.

The Collective Nora loves snacks and cuddle puddles

The Collective Nora waits for a time when it can just be. Be alone, be amongst others, be as it is.

The Collective Nora waits for nothing—it is a being all about balance and the thirst for it.

The Collective Nora wishes that Impermanence Man could be with them at all times.

The Collective Nora wishes this space always, appreciating the sacredness of the infrequency of it.

The Collective Nora wondered how to continue the Collective Nora when not on adventures. How the social formation could be political not only in its own fold.

The Collective Nora wanted to quench the why, the desire to live and be supported to think out loud or not, and have people care and think for one another.

The Collective Nora wanted and wished the endlessness of it all. over and through these things and the years, they felt deeply in love.