

Sestina in Prose

By Katharine Coles

It was like climbing a mountain to those of us who'd climbed one. To the others, it was like, I suppose, something else. In other words, we let everybody find her own figure of speech.

Not that it—speech—lay thick on the ground, or mountain; it presented itself one word at a time, far between. A body had to keep an eye out, like for firewood at dusk, or else

miss her chance. Nobody else, let's face it, cared about metaphor, or even simile, the like-it-or-not-ness of the mountain pretty much getting between a body and her musing, in its going. One

step at a time, anyone could lose herself or someone else just staring at her feet. And *if a body meet a body* is not mere speech but something that could happen, like hopping a bus—though on the mountain

you'll catch no rides, worse luck, the mountain requires to be climbed on foot, one after the other, nothing else will get you up it. There's nothing like such obduracy but in the wild, nobody can tell you otherwise. No simple figure,

this struggle: just a crag, your burden, and your own two feet. Say otherwise, talk through your hat, which I don't care for.

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