We walk one of the world’s most dangerous roads

Our mountain is in central China, friend, far from your Hangzhou apartment sardine sandwiched with grad students. To get to this mountain, we hop a train, two buses, a minivan, and a three-wheeled truck. We walk one of the world’s most dangerous roads. It switches back across the mountain like a stitch sewn by the villagers, who traded goats for tools to create a permanent route in and out, an alternate to the 720 step zigzagged Sky Ladder. This mountain is a heart with many hard chambers. This mountain is a door. This jagged road is its keyhole. Its key is a body, its key dynamite. Depth created by debris, like when we, inexplicably, begin to drop rocks into the ravine below. They fall like rocks. Two grown men, the only two white men on this mountain, chucking hunks of sandstone over a ledge just to watch them fall and hit the ground. They are like icebergs calving, and their sounds just as slow, as they chase their crashes back up the cliff face. Long periods of time happen. All at once. We see them. They happen to be down there chopping wood, some villagers who are lumbermen, they’re felling a tree. Our rocks fall feet from them. They take cover under an outcrop of rock. I use the digital zoom of my camera. Depth created by depth. His hands cup to his mouth. His hollers are in Mandarin, you think, but the echoes tumble with each other like fighting birds in flight.

(no stanza break)
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Depth by distance.
Depth by our failure
to ever take it all in.
Five minutes later,
they’re chopping again,
and ten minutes later,
the tree comes down.

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