JOURNEY

In the beginning, the tree was far.
The trunk thick and dark, lit from behind, on a hill.
The branches were heavy. Leafless. Some almost touching the earth.
But not quite.

The tree haunted the ground, and from where she stood
looking up at it, she could feel the tree trolls
turning beneath her. Awed, she came every sunset,
satisfied to gaze at a distance.

And then one evening, quite suddenly,
the tree was mantled in white blossoms!
Also, the tree had moved. Or the earth had leveled.
She was forced to stand and stare so close
the blossoms became her sky.

Finally, there was no room but the tree's room.
The trunk had grown so round, the branches spread like hawks,
if she were to remain
she had no other choice
but to move inside.

And terrified she did.
And amazed herself.

At once, her body stretched to fire,
her face flew off like a dove's,
and her arms: a parenthesis of light.

Now, her darkness is the tree's darkness,
and her passion's from the root.
And her heart—
not shared,
but owned.
i did not want to walk

down the corridor.
She would try to act normal
but that was impossible.
She was deaf;
her speech clung
to her mouth like cobwebs.
She persisted in looking
I would smile
She persisted
And when I strained or looked away,
she tugged my arm
I did not want—
Her breasts
so tiny
—to walk
The only two
after night class
in that yellow hall.
If I could have caught her throat to unplug—
She, squeezing her tongue through her teeth,
and her eyes the shape of a cat’s
I wanted to give her back, no,
I don’t mean that, I mean—
Her face
all broken out I
dream
about her.

COMMENTARY

I had been meditating for about two months and one morning there appeared a
large tree, by large I mean one with a thick bark and broad branches. I felt myself
looking at it from some distance. The tree, the image of it, stayed with me
throughout the week, not only during meditation, however. At some point later in
the month I imagined being very close to the tree, with my body and face pressed up
against it. I enjoy throwing my arms around trees, hugging them, as it were, so I
wasn’t surprised with this new image in the meditation. The strangest part, however,
was when several months later I sensed being enclosed in the bark of the tree. This
was part of the meditative image, but it also became a sense of focusing which I
experienced in my daily life, that sense of finally, finally taking full responsibility for
myself.

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