

Because I Could Not Touch You

Because there was no sign of you but you were known to me still, hidden stream
running the center of our backyard like a broken spine. Because

the grown-ups yoked to their lives, were heavy-hearted and solemn. Because
I could not see you but knew—crouching low, I played

at unearthing you—soft rivulet, silvery depth. Because you carried with you
a dream of tiny fishes, of starlight, of leaf litter and red clay, tunneling

whatever truths I could not bear. Because I was certain I could smell
above your banks the squirming of salamanders, the mud frogs, the bones

of old women, their rusty tools. Because of your presence I was certain
if I unearthed you—ghost creek unwinding, a rush in my throat, you might offer

a mystic elixir to wash all the wounds. I was thirsty and impatient,
digging hole after hole in search. If only I could know—who covered you, who

jailed you, who captured your shallow notes? Because I already knew
something about buried treasure, though I never wanted to. And built instead

my own stream, lining it with sea-glass and broken china, running the garden hose
through. Because in your nearness I met my own longing

—a river of dusk that held the bloom, that held what I prayed could not be taken.
Because your water was my water too.

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Letter From the Edge of Every Known Thing

Dear Ginkgo, are we so different? You at the edge of undress
—I, undone, unkempt, infant at my breast. I have this wild hair
curling around my neck & you—wind through your near-spent, your
yellow flare, like a body on the brink. Dear Ginkgo, whose faces
I have searched as if looking for a lighthouse on each leaf; or somewhere
a salvation pressed into your trunk. You, whose leaves have rattled
the grief-noise away—I have a mouth, I have these two hands
—what use are they? Each season I take your note, try my best
at translation. How gently you hold the birds, so carefully. Dear
Ginkgo, you riot of saffron storms, you shelter in the grief-mist.
I dreamt my father sat in your branches—watching me. You
whose life will far outlast ours—what do you think of me,
finally, so late, mothering? My nipples ache, my daughter all new,
her impossible face. Oh Ginkgo, you who have been my companion
through this avalanche of birth & departure: the two of them
crisscrossing the sky behind you. I have fingers to tear into the bread,
a hunger. I have a solemn face in the night, in the hidden rooms;
my body a laboratory of milk & lullabies. Dear Ginkgo, scraping
the whimpery windows through which I peer, thank you—
even when your branches shake—leaf for leaf for hair for breath
for root for feet, you eat with your whole body—a thousand rhythms
breaking, baring, rustling, shaking. Oh Ginkgo, thank you—my father
watches me, watching you, sits in your branches as starlight
on my daughter's face, as mist, as droplets of rain. Dear
Ginkgo, each leaf cleft—when some of them fall
they divide like wings.

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