

Tone Poem

1

Moonlight.
Scratchy trees.
The owls unfold
feathery ashes
and rise on slow big wings.

A witch curdles milk
in a pail. A still runs dry.
A mackinaw full of bones hangs
from clothes-line over a well.

2

Blue nainsook, jaconet and lawn
batiste in yellow, white mulls
violet marquisette, apple-green silk
crimson madras and voile, ballooning
in a stream. One by one
they are lifted, folded and wrung
by the slender woman dressed
in a brace of droplets. Pockets
of trapped air twist, gush
and water like sweet juice
foams over knuckle and wrist.

It's the witch
without her disguises —
dayclothes draped over low shrubs
like a rainbow spread out to dry.

Later, under the trellis
there will be shrimp, wine
and sleep in a loose print
of grape-leaf shadow.

3

When slant light
crosses the dream
she wakes to a feather
touched by the sun
floating over the trees.

4

Evening begins. Lights
in the valley. Calls and cries.

The tramp with the broken
hat, the witch, a wisp
of black smoke in his arms,
turn and glide like night-birds
to the bodiless laughter
of water, through mist
touched gold by the moon
in the cleft sea
of hemlock and fir
down the empty highway.

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