

Ten Years after Planting the House Field

The light is thin birdlight.
As the sun shines through the air
it burns away my footsteps,
until the mountains are your dark branches
over me. Trees, summer by summer
we have grown old apart
and have turned farther towards years of wind:
remembering you as you remember me,
in the soil we've tasted together,
for the first time I can pronounce our names
among the weeds: flowers of stone, hangers-on.

December sky, thin, one day before storm,
a mountain shimmering through it, ineffable,
rises up in me and dies down.
I crush a leaf between my fingers: pale ash.
It is a country that will never come again.
The wind heaves itself up off the ground,
tearing up the leaves — shreds of rain —
and then sinks off into the air.
It means nothing. It is a dry hour.

Trees, I have abandoned you.
The wind is a far valley
where no man has walked and returned,
but I have returned to you
and if you will have me back, I will stay,
though no man know my words —
I carry them like stray scraps of memory,
blurred in the light —
like spring silt in summer water —
abandoned by common speech,
as are stars, as are you and I.
I have stopped hoping for gain
but hope for traffic between us —
hesitant, in this wild soil,
in these mountain winds.

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