

Pieced Into Treetops

Trish Hopkinson



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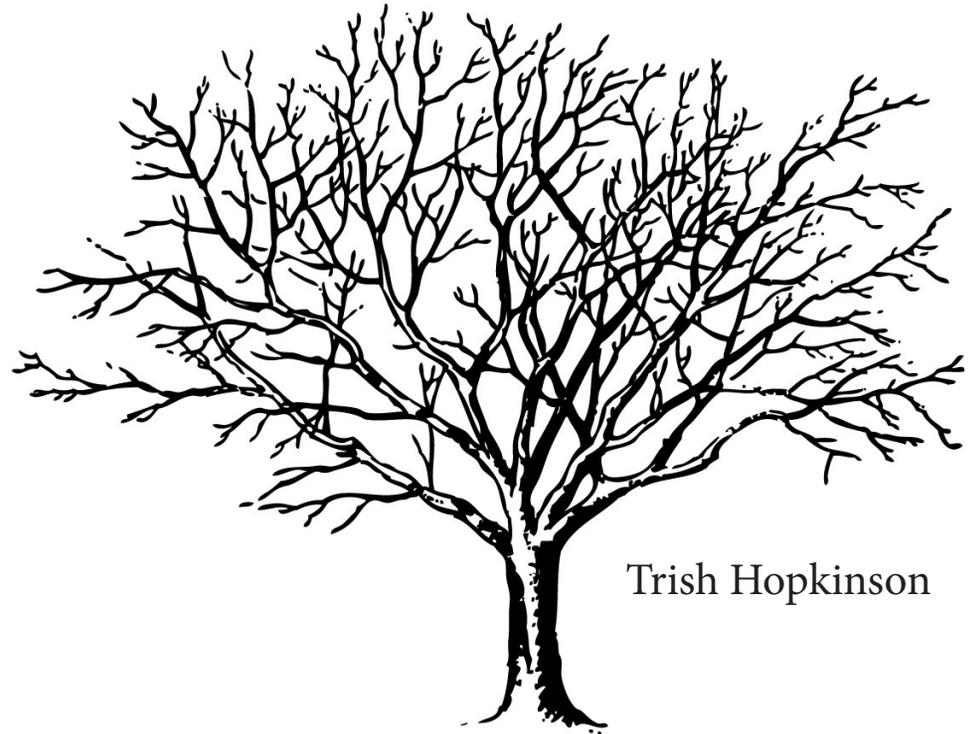
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Cherry Colored

The evening rises new and the wine yet unopened
beckons like blue jays at dusk, calling mates to the nest after a
rainstorm.

It's warm enough to open the windows and listen.
Night's branches stretch wide and create pathways to the moon,
a journey not yet taken, but dreamt about in books
and only beholden to the poet and the cherry-colored pour
of repose and leisure, from the cork to the cup,
from the intellect to the material, from the pen to its page.



A Painting of Me

It hung on the wall in her house when I was young.
She sent my portrait to an address from the back of a magazine
with a money order for the specified amount.
A foreign artist recreated my infant image
on canvas, with oil paint, and then mailed it to her.
My chubby legs peeked out from underneath the light blue
calico dress my mother made; the bonnet I wore matched.
One summer, when I returned to my Grandmother's house,
I asked if she still had the painting, the frame needed repaired
and so it no longer hung on her wall.
When she brought it down from the closet shelf, I was in awe
of its size. It had seemed much larger, seen by my toddler eyes.
She offered it to me and I took it home, planning to have it
cleaned
and the frame repaired, for someday hanging in my daughter's
room.
When my grandmother was still alive, I couldn't afford
to restore the painting, but now that she's gone,
I can't seem to take it down from my own closet shelf.

Mouth Open to the Sky

"It's raining!" she exclaims with excitement,
a child accustomed to Utah desert.
Open windows; open doors; let it in.
She leaned and pressed her nose against the screen,
and inhaled. I could hear her breathe in deep.
She slid her hand out under the roof's edge
to help her estimate what to expect
before stepping out the door to get wet.
I glance at my jacket hung on the back
of the chair, then turn back to her. She spins
in circles, her mouth open to the sky,
her eyelashes tremble at each raindrop.
She senses my pause and sees me watching.
I stop and put on my jacket, hood up.



Diamond-Shaped Shadows

Light,
pieced into treetops,
pulled from solar beams
like x-ray vision,
like kites with super powers,
pulling on their strings,
trying to dip bow-tied tails
into the glare.
The tether holder below
salutes above the brow
to shade his eyes
and hold the kite to the earth,
where it belongs—
where people stand in the dark
of diamond-shaped shadows,
crossed for support,
and weighted by an unending
spool of cord.

Light,
hovers atop candles,
fed by a waxed-dipped thread,
like floss through teeth,
like paraffin angels,

with melting myth wings
trying to climb above clouds,
to sit and watch over.
The masses below
kneel next to alters
to shade their ache
and hold the flame to the soul,
to warm their desires,
where candles jump in the dark
from drafts beneath doors,
supported by a cross
and weighted by the unending
ugly of guilt.



Dawn

Bursting through,
 Winter lies at my feet
 like a shamed mistress.
 I bow to bid adieu to the chill and the dreary
 and welcome the warmth of a new season.
 I nod gratefully to the dawn
 as she rises early to greet me
 and pursues the equinox in flirty sandals
 and a bit of shimmer atop her
 brow. The earth tilts his bowler
 as she sways her hips past the moon
 and finds her place at edge
 of the horizon.

Rumi Once Said, “Poetry Can Be Dangerous”

like a swan dive into a sonnet,
 balancing blank verse while posing for William Tell,
 dueling pistols of Haiku, “in five,” “no seven,” “ok, five,”
 and parachuting couplets falling from cockpits found
 on the wings of flapping poets.
 Dangerous cinquain snipers
 sit atop sestina sky scrapers
 and aim for iambic secret agents,
 each with five feet and only two toes.
 Lyrics and limericks eat tanka Twinkies
 and smoke epic cigarettes,
 chase them down with bourbon ballads
 and shoot villanelles into their veins.
 The bad boys of poetry slam
 their fingers in rhyme doors
 and set fire to free verse
 until the microphone melts
 and the audience yelps, “PUSH poet,”
 pushing like poetry pimps, like word lords
 that eat risk for breakfast
 with stanzas on the side. Literally
 daredevils, heroes, and heroines—
 poets that produce,
 poets that dance,
 poets that write dangerously.



SONY

Flickers of light beams bounce
across the surfaces, freeing themselves
from the black box prison
curiously hung on the wall.
Sounds of life echo into the room,
sounds of those trapped within,
as if a recorder is flying from
space to space the sounds change and mix.
They sound empty, monophonic.
One moment it's bright, the next
it's dark and quiet, then bright, then . . .
My hearing suffers from the sounds of
the prisoners. I see no options, no method
to release them. Who is this "SONY"
and why does it keep them?
I fear they may see me if I wander too close,
but they don't speak to me, they don't . . .
There's a button called Power.
I press it. They are gone.

Perched

Garnet glass refracts the day
making my eyes squint to see
the buzzing wings, nearly silent.
Responding to the sweet scent,
timid and thin, the beak leans in
and sips syrup from the funnel.
For a split second the bird's feet rest,
still to the touch, it's weight unnoticed
by the dangling, sugar-filled vessel.
I don't mean to, but I blink
and the perch stands alone.



How to Put a Book Back in its Place

As I turned the corner and folded it
 inward to save my place on the page,
 my margins expanded to unknown
 angles and my mind bent
 at the binding, trying to loosen,
 to break free from the hardback
 volume of outside obligations,
 shutting myself in this tome
 of another's priorities.

I should purge the articles, the extra
 adjectives, the interjections, and ramblings,
 to make way for more images and visions,
 themes that spell out my own chapter headings.

I should flip the edges with a consistent thumbing
 and watch the characters move through my
 glances with importance and rhythm.

But instead, I put the story back in
 its place, I fold myself inward,
 collapse the chapters,
 and close the cover.

Saving Mine

Inspired by "Wasting my Time," by The White Stripes

Trying not to check the time,
 you seem to be unsettled,
 as if you can sense the lie
 even before my misleading words are uttered.

I've tried not to pain your pride,
 but you won't remove your armor
 or give me a look inside
 and I'm tired of being the one without cover.

I heard you grin when you withdrew.
 You knew I would be leaving.
 You're the one I did this to,
 and you let me, made me go, without warning.



Adventures of the Farmhouse on Route 6

When our entire address was “Route 6,”
the road in front of our house was dirt
and rocks, and the irrigation ditch
was deeper than I was tall.
On a good day, the wind would blow
pig-farm stench in the other direction.
On cold days, we’d step out into waist-high drifts,
dragging our worn-out sled behind us
and slide down the hill, right over
the snowed-in cellar door.
On warm days, we could run outside
in our underclothes or walk to the pond.
On weekends we’d build forts in the unused ditches,
and scoop up grass-clippings
to fill garbage sack furniture.
In the summer evenings,
we’d collect fireflies in mason jars
with a few leaves and stems
to keep them as two-day pets.
Sometimes, I would feel bad
so I’d set them free when my brother wasn’t looking.
At dusk when Dad came home,
he’d holler over his CB radio
out a speaker shaped like a megaphone

stuck to his car roof with a magnet.
It was quiet, you could hear his tires
on the gravel road long before
he started his announcement.
We didn’t care; we ran outside
as if we’d never had a better surprise.



Aspirations of a Forty-Something Poet

Poetry pushes me forward, like
art at a jaunt, running
toward the most
rewarding.
I scorn the days I
can't express upon the page—
I crave both the release
and the ecstasy.

Tasting Rain

She steps into the
wet scent of rain, twirling 'round
with mouth to the sky.



Chest of Drawers

A child is born unbuilt and not unlike
a Swedish chest of drawers delivered
by trucks and placed on porches, box-enclosed.
Except, their parts aren't labeled, stacked by type.

Their personas on an assembly line
of parents, teachers, critics; thoughts exposed
to concepts, beliefs, lies and truths disclosed.
A bolt is turned and faith is twisted tight.

Adults who have the tools that children need
are often short supply, but kids will grow
without, without their help, without respect.

It takes more than reproduction, than seeds
to create children, create minds that know
to fill their bureaus with sense, not objects.

The Poet Sitting Next to Me

Trembling erratically,
an autumn leaf just released
from the highest limb,
his body never at rest--
a performance poet.
I'd like to think his words
were never still in his head,
tumbling to his lips,
toppling to the page,
always active,
always in motion,
always living.



Braided Annie Dillard

Inspired by Annie Dillard "The Maytrees"

In drops or torrents—a wonder
 it was, but . . .
 darker tide's coming in together.
 Diving smelled brief,
 blending from all.
 Awareness was his.
 Parachute failed sawdust.
 Their hollows are his body.
 Near your brain, a braided river . . .
 Your mind holds sand in the bed,
 blind sea made her blush as suntan,
 outdoor shower as if they should bulge.

Sex and Light

inspired by Anne Carson "Mimnermos and the Motions of Hedonism."

Call them pleasures:
 running a warm bath,
 a cup of cherries,
 a cup of wine,
 the pale blue light
 of the sun across the sky.
 Haunted by hedonism,
 the freshness of sex,
 the endless motion of self,
 the hunger, the marveling,
 the pulse that grabs us.
 Mining the songs of night
 in two directions to justify
 our riposte in verse.



Sniff

My shadow sniffs at me
as if trying to determine whether or not
I am real.
Our fingertips embrace at the edges,
the backs of mine warm from the light.
My shadow's cool and confused.
I rise up tall trying to make
it disappear beneath
the highest rays of the sun,
but it refuses to tuck
under my toes,
inching its way out
as my posture relaxes.
Just like my lightness,
my shadow stays.

Palimpsest

Imperialism coats the inside of my mouth and tongue,
down my gullet and into my pot belly,
a palimpsest on all the world and what it's become,
the overhanging crags of exclusivity.
An opaque film stretches over culture and origin,
the membrane protecting the albumen,
the history of signification that clouds our vision
and distorts the purpose of our actions.
Like missionaries, we convert and overtly cover
in the name of one king or another,
we misrecognize the implications of progress,
or rather, the oppression we pretend not to witness.



Lonely Soup

First, check refrigerator for ingredients:
 potatoes, couple of celery stalks, unopened bag
 of baby carrots, half an onion, moldy strawberries.
 Second, peel the potatoes; throw out the berries;
 chop the rest.
 Third, place in a large pot with boiling broth.
 Fourth, pour a glass of wine and wait.
 Fifth, burn tongue tasting the soup.
 Sixth, pour two ladlefuls into favorite glass bowl.
 Seventh, consume soup, pour more wine.
 First, check email for messages:
 a coupon, an appointment reminder, spam,
 an advertisement, more spam, nothing from you.
 Second, check voicemail and text messages;
 there are none.
 Third, look out the window into the driveway.
 Fourth, pour a glass of wine and wait.
 Fifth, scold heart for aching.
 Sixth, question confidence and hairstyle.
 Seventh, tears make for salty wine; pour.

You Fit

You comfort me when there's no place to go,
 slip over my head when I'm too sleepy for thought,
 and wipe the wet of a tough day from my face
 with the softness of your sleeve.
 You smell of fresh laundry and adorn my body
 like a little black dress, but you fit around me
 more carefully and in all the right places—
 you're just like my favorite pajamas.



The Swing

Inspired by "The Swing" oil painting by Jean-Honore Fragonard

Happy accidents often display true intentions--
 a glimpse beneath the skirt in the wake of cherubim.
 Former virtue may become a thought soon left unsung,
 a girl regarded as a woman rather than young.
 A curtsy to her lover once thrust up by the sway
 and leave her gentleman for cupid without dismay.

Both the Same

I believe in solidity—marble: chiseled away to form a physique,
 female parts, male parts, arms and elbows, shins and knees.
 —bronzes: a model cast to the core and poured into the void,
 then polished and patinaed into effigies, children, warriors.
 —bricks: shaped from clay and adobe, cut concrete and stone,
 stacked and mortared into temples, schools, asylums, prisons.
 I believe in fluidity—flowing, gushing, hand carving canyons,
 flourishing for the living, shape-shifting into ice and steam.
 —molecules: cells forming blood, pumping pulse, filling veins,
 feeding the brain, feeding people, living well or evil, both the same.
 —flammable: gasoline and propane, lighter fluid, all removers,
 whiskey, nitrogen, fuel for living well or evil, fuel for flame.



Moby Wins

Herman was a writer from Melville.
He came from the cape and liked whales.
In his tale of sailors
and pirates and whalers,
Moby wins and dumbfounds poor Ishmael.

Afternoon Love-Making

A window washer slides from floor to floor.
The squeegee squeaks away streaks
erasing the haze and the spots.
His line of sight stops at the glass,
unaware of what's contained behind
some blinds enclosed, others raised,
rooms dark and unmoving or daylight lit—
the shadows move peripherally like spectres.
We don't notice him until he stops and looks in.
We laugh and don't bother pulling up the covers.



Lament of the Caveman

Waiting in the brush, a meal within steps,
 but clumsy is as clumsy does
 and a rustle alerts the buck,
 ears twitch in attention and hooves
 strike a path to escape.
 A chase between caveman and survival
 leads both man and animal
 into a valley, into the shadows
 of dusk and soon night.
 The caveman's ears twitch
 as he senses threat and
 knows he'll soon be the prey.
 He abandons his hunger and returns
 to his cave—the coals now cold.

Goodbye Maytree

*Inspired by Lou Bigelow from *The Maytrees* by Annie Dillard*

I summited the monument again today.
 As I looked out over the ocean, over
 the weary the shacks and the dunes, I felt small.
 This task of letting go,
 of resisting bitterness and finding peace,
 is something I can do.
 It is not my failing when others find love.
 It is not my flaws that cause others to leave.
 I will climb this monument every day
 until the work is done, until I am whole.
 This is something I can do.
 This is a task, a task of letting go.



Reformation

The curve of your ear drops
soft to the lobe,
connects to the line of your neck
and traces your throat
to the hollow of collar bone.
The jut of your jaw,
whiskered and smooth,
to the supple lips and gentle
lift to your sleeping lids
catch my breath as if it were thoughts
and an ache of longing and grace
lightens the weight
of my head and reforms root.

Worlding

She holds her palm like a cup
for fear she might lose the tiny grains
to the ground. She's worn to the soul
beneath tattered cloth, her bare toes
pressing into the earth.
She nearly blends into the stone,
the vines at her feet, their leaves
bowing as if to worship.
But it's her stare that haunts
and distorts, surreal and smart,
like a child that knows too much
and holds the universe in her hand.



Ode to Endings

Tonight I ponder the ends of things—
the ends of stories and shoelaces,
the ends of lines and relationships,
of articles, of candle wicks, of women, and men.

I contemplate the end of history,
the end of the present, the end of the world,
the end of faith and prophecy,
as well as the tail-ends of things,
like catching them, the tail-end of the news,
of a TV. show, of a conversation.

I wonder why you'd want happy endings
rather than happy beginnings and
whether or not I should watch
the alternate endings and why
they weren't used, why have two?

It seems we always have to choose
between a sad ending, a dramatic ending,
an explosive ending, a clever ending,
a mind-bending ending, an unbelievable end
to a howling, pink bottomed, new birth
of an otherwise slobbering, mundane day—
a day that giggles when tickled,
blubbers when hungry,
coos to the moon and cries for its mother.
Tomorrow, today will be one day older.