

Elm By Sylvia Plath

I know the bottom, she says. I know it with my great tap root:
It is what you fear.

I do not fear it: I have been there.

Is it the sea you hear in me,

Its dissatisfactions?

Or the voice of nothing, that was your madness?

Love is a shadow.

How you lie and cry after it

Listen: these are its hooves: it has gone off, like a horse.

All night I shall gallop thus, impetuously,

Till your head is a stone, your pillow a little turf,

Echoing, echoing.

Or shall I bring you the sound of poisons?

This is rain now, this big hush.

And this is the fruit of it: tin-white, like arsenic.

I have suffered the atrocity of sunsets.

Scorched to the root

My red filaments burn and stand, a hand of wires.

Now I break up in pieces that fly about like clubs.

A wind of such violence

Will tolerate no bystanding: I must shriek.

The moon, also, is merciless: she would drag me

Cruelly, being barren.

Her radiance scathes me. Or perhaps I have caught her.

I let her go. I let her go

Diminished and flat, as after radical surgery.

How your bad dreams possess and endow me.

I am inhabited by a cry.

Nightly it flaps out

Looking, with its hooks, for something to love.

I am terrified by this dark thing

That sleeps in me;

All day I feel its soft, feathery turnings, its malignity.

Clouds pass and disperse.

Are those the faces of love, those pale irretrievables?

Is it for such I agitate my heart?

I am incapable of more knowledge.

What is this, this face

So murderous in its strangle of branches?—

Its snaky acids hiss.

It petrifies the will. These are the isolate, slow faults

That kill, that kill, that kill.