

Soon They Will Fly

A Meditation at Fitzgerald Lake

by

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For you, Momma,
who knew this love so well.

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*Closeby, the wettest muds were rife with burweed, arrowhead,
and grass-like plants.... Further back from the water's edge,
species richness increased dramatically.*

Laurie L. Sanders
on Fitzgerald Lake,
from *Rediscovering Northampton*
The Natural History
of City-Owned Conservation Area

The tender plants are coming, Momma,
tiny violets, trillium,
fiddleheads just piping up,
palest embryos,
a color not yet natural to the world,
peopling the forest
with a quiet waiting, listening,
all turning, circling toward each other.

The lady's slipper, rising out of the lap
of dampness, staring into her glossy,
silver-dusted skirt; I want to tap
her chin to look me in the eye.

Happiness comes in a tree root
underfoot, a gnarled, curled hardness
pressing into my arch.

Because you can't walk this path
with me today, I walk it
for us.

You asked once
what brought me peace.
Religion had taught you fear.

I tried to answer rightly
and describe trust.

But I couldn't express
this deep longing
between periods of grace.

I am on a journey every day
for the way to surpass loneliness
to where loneliness becomes

what, I can't say.
But I get near it here,
on this daily tramp.

I come in all seasons
to wade in cool light,
to gather flutter and rasp,
to leave my cargo of thoughts
at the feet of trees.

I hear the herons calling alarms,
bearing down from canopy nests.
I want to be carried on their backs
until my thoughts sail
to those high places
where thoughts are not rubble,
but a clear stream,
from which life is
witnessed
before it passes on.

In the deep woods,
any damp thing, wood or stone,
invites a moss,
mounds of emerald softness,
forests from far above,
as if every rock were an island.

First one
rippled mushroom fanning the bark of a fallen oak,
flirting curve of white, tight flesh;
then thousands,
lights going on in every crease
of woods. Like
toenails, or fingernails,
barnacles, or a clam's bisque rings,
a moth's wings standing up, unfurled,
as if they were never meant
to be just themselves.

I walk this path for us
in all seasons.

Persistent blue and green bodies of dragonflies.
Snapdragons, honeybees thrusting in hard,
holding on with all legs.
Forget-me-nots, duckweed, ragweed in rugged yellow,
long-hanging seed heads of grasses,
rampant jewelweed.