

Walt Whitman expects so much of me

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i.

Today, I can only point towards the mountains, that way the forests, the everywhere-backyards.

Today, I am a statue, one-legged; sometimes I am a grandfather or the spider

who tricked raven into stealing fire.

I am everything, but not everything I once wanted, not even as a child sipping tea

and eating oranges—

ii.

You are the people I introduce as friends who run like little children in their fathers'

shirts, unpack clotheslines and remind me of my mother

when you intently stare at grass blades,

at katydids on grass blades.

I am everything, and I have spent eleven years getting to know you; I am a botanist

who has spent his lifetime on one leaf, grown-up and childish, reserved for better times—

you turned and sung inside yourself

like ospreys or sheets

untethered.

iii.

You and I, we are young and not so driven off into the world of the mountains

to have roots dug in.

I wandered among them (always a boy born hiking) whispered in and out, lost and undermined;

I examined the rocks and I was the stone that made them

hard and fast and cold. You though, you never wavered for a second,
pulling me back, unplanted

hobbit-like: only you and mountains led your way.
And I, I always followed after.

iv.

When I was young, I moved in forests like the aphids and ladybugs
chasing myself over their detritus. I tell of oranges, peels left composting,
a child who built his own playgrounds out of willow trees—

You keep the tarmac like oceans inside yourself while I
built my quilted logs together into arks; cracked sidewalks and the osprey only
brought me from
the mountains, but Walt Whitman still expects so much of me—
I cannot be everything alone.

v.

You were once my unforgotten lover, my childhood in the way that star-gazing
is both remorseful and romantic. You built in me a fire with
tumbleweed and dead sagebrush and all the other timber

we could find. And I don't feel like we thanked those dead things enough, or
knew how,
even if each branch needed to die before we could be warm, bodies that we are
or no.

You must believe me when I tell you that I love you, as that imaginary
grandfather
loved his grandchildren in spite of everything
he had given up to the world.

And well, yes, I did love that jay yesterday, with his beak like some old
Grecian nose—
and the way he flew out to the edge of our woods to stare
down that nose at the empty feeder;
and later, even when the woods were empty

and there were only some trees.

Tomorrow, I will sing together like logjams,
bracing my ribcage against a tree,
younger than I am now.