

through trees to the river

at some late-early hour I wake
sheets sweated to skin
moonlight blaring through curtains.
I rise, open the window
the dream floats
leaves painted on water...

the crickets had quit for the night
I came down a path through trees, their leaves
motionless as if this state of grace could last

on the river a deep amber moon
perfectly reflected
its virgin dust unmarred by ruffle or ripple

though long past midsummer
two lovers lay on the grassy bank
and kissed and sighed --

I leave them to their tryst
as they whisper of swimming out
floating in the river's tranquil moon.

...Where did you go? Come back to bed, she says,

clouds close over the moon
the curtains inhale a spilled breeze
a leaf releases, falls to the river
is ferried on its current.

© James Dott
first appeared in Hipfish

Water

Your first water
flowed from your mother
and hers from hers
immersed in its uncountable lives
as river rises to caress its willowed bank
comes clear in stillness
hear the glacier's face sheer and crack
calving off centuries
listen for the collapsing mountains of cloud
and the sigh of the rain drop
that fell for miles
when it is cleaved by a blade of grass
recoupled, then lost
puddles pooling on the ground
drop after drop drawn in
by the ancient intimacy of water
each river, its tributaries,
their streams, their rivulets
branching like roots
reaching up and in
embracing earth
tell again how it cleanses,
quenches, rests, but never
ceases in its journey
how even after a long sleep
deep in stone
water will awaken
and flow
toward home

December Among the Weeds

Slack tide, blueless sky, the river,
surface polished a muddy clouded emerald,
gently laps at rows of blackened pilings,
long-dead trees driven deep into the bottom,
the docks, the piers they held, those who worked there
filleters, canners, net menders, stevedores
now long dismantled, drowned, or forgotten
each piling that remains above high water
sculpted by decay, hosting clumps of grass,
a sprig of willow still clasping one tattered leaf of gold,
a few coots, some lesser scaups,
a lone merganser male glide through, wakes
easing into the ebb

Along the weedy bank
rain-glossed green of ivy, holly
with its clotted crimson drops,
a dangling blackberry cane,
at its tip a pale white cluster of blossoms, buds,
no killing frost yet, no bees to ferry pollen
no berries that will fully ripen, no chance of fertile seed

I could assign these flowers, their empty ovaries
a human trait: *Foolishness, Defiance*
could take them as a sign
to counter dimming spirits, or
simply stop among the weeds
to marvel how in the darkest week of December
something blooms