

jodi johnson

Sequoia

A thousand winters bowed their heads,
twisted branches close to their chests.
They were no longer slender columns, the sky
arched between them, but thickened and shortened with age
like old women.

She jumped into the blackened belly of one.
She imagined herself covering the narrow mouth with hide
to keep out the rain, sleeping against one wall
on a bed of green boughs. She looked up and could see
the smoke from her fire hanging in a grey cloud.

At Tharp's Log she saw the cabin built in a fallen tree,
the shutters with horseshoes for hinges,
and wondered what it was like to wake up here
in light spilling like water through the windows.
She walked out to the meadow where October grass
rattled its seed pods above her.
When she shook the stalks, white wings of seeds
drifted into her hair like petals.
This is what the trees feel in winter, she thought,
the gods shaking the clouds over their heads, the snow
sifting down through their upturned beards.

Later, she ate lunch in a clearing.
She could see the air moving in streams through the trees,
carrying seeds, dust, ribbons of spider web,
insects on sequined wings. Four crows
flew past sieving the air through their feathers.
On the horizon, thunderheads gathered so slowly
they seemed to be painted there.

If the storm broke, she knew lightning would flash from ground
to sky on the outstretched fingers of the trees.
She thought of God and Adam reclined on clouds, their
extended
hands not quite touching, and felt for a moment
the synapse between things, the leap across it.