Another Autumn (forthcoming in "Into a New Country")

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Another Autumn

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I. November

Splendor of red leaves now raked
into piles of decomposition. Earth
folded up and stored into barns. Evening
on the anniversary of the great armistice.

(The reader of stars showed me
the galaxy of calcite pinpoints
in swirling dark. Only a ten percent chance
it means anything.)

Then through the cord, the disembodied,
absolute word of the magician
who reads the message in the honeycomb
broke faith with the years, jerked me
from the known world into shadow.
Comedo. Cribriform. All learning
cracked in that second. No treaty
with this intimate rebellion. Hurling myself
against certainty like a bee
captured in a jar. Was I there
the moment before? Or was it another life
folded into this one?

When sleep finally came, I stepped
in a dream through octagonal rooms
of a cluttered, roofless house of cardboard walls,
tables and desks piled with papers, gutters
leaking ice melt, back door opening to a broken
step sloping toward a bare yard and leafless forest
etched upright and gray, shrouded
in late autumn fog.

Already the stars have lost their names,
my choices laid on the table
with scalpel and radiograph.

Stunned like the song sparrow that hit the window
and lay shivering on pavement
I pace the gravel toward the barn and my boots
make no sound. Across the road a calf bawls, culled from the herd.
Exuberant roots of poplars delve into soil, their sandalwood trunks rising indifferent and strong, sending branches across the day moon, hard and white. Like a memory lost, a red belly flies from a birch tree leaving the landscape empty. Yesterday’s worry drifts away like melted ice down the creek.
Once cradled like gems, regrets and grudges dissolve; ambition turns to farce. In the garden I meet an old neglected god striding in shadows, brown leaves in his hair. Fog drifting along the grass silvered with frost opens to swallow me into its white lace.

II. December

So this is resurrection: instant of knowing I’ve entered the world again, sailed though hollow tubes on dreamless sleep to another shore where praising women circle and the magician dances and sings.

Days from now, earth will take her first long paces toward the light, and I will meet at the moon’s changing a crouching god who has trapped the sun.

For now, bees dream on honeycombs while bright stars circle cold and alone, eclipsed by the dawn’s indifferent splendor.