

## *Laurie Sheck*

### FROM **BLACK SERIES**

On the crest of the far hill, the lone tree  
with bare black branches is Medusa's head,  
her snake-hair spitting stars into the sky.  
I would hack her at the neck,  
watch color and movement flood back into the world.  
The eyes in her hair, like the intricate, stopped workings  
of a clock, would press against the mossy ground,  
and the tongues harden, small roads to nowhere, blue in the blue light.

Then reds and oranges will startle me awake,  
Hawkweed coming back to take the fields  
like the hurt violent silence after requiem.  
The children will braid wildflowers  
into the horses' manes and tails.  
Dull green as dollar bills, the tall grasses barely waver,  
but when wind and noonlight flood them  
their silvery undersides rise up to cut the stillness.  
Their shivering doesn't frighten me;  
it is not a nervous thing. It knows nothing of the fever fed by fear.

Far from the stillness of mannequins  
the lambs wander, a quiet attentiveness, over the earth.  
Thistles stick to their foreheads, such tiny misplaced crowns.  
Across the road, two horses rub against the fence,  
flies feeding on their eyes.  
A car gleams in its metallic estrangement,  
odd creature with shiny purple skin.

This is the kingdom that quickens and won't sleep;  
the fierce ignited light of tenderness, unburied.  
Tonight the moon will rise  
full and white, like Medusa's murdered face.

But she will turn nothing to stone. I have my Hawkweed in a bowl,  
orange-red as Chinese silk, a fiery bridal veil, a vow.  
It is this my eyes will close on.

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Night ministers to the trees—no, it just comes on  
like a TV set does, but softer, and more slowly,  
layering grays upon grays; some slick, some rough and scumbled.  
The hem of things is loosening, the bird-cries disappearing.  
Even the earth seems unrooted, unresolved.

Somewhere decisions are clamoring to be made. I know this.  
But I'm watching the black-on-gray of trees and sky,  
that agile blurring, as when the mind slips free of doctrine,  
feeling within itself the confused intelligent wing-beats of the hidden.  
Somewhere in rooms and on terminals the speculative frenzy  
of the market has stopped until tomorrow, shares have risen  
or fallen, trading has been *brisk* or *slow*. Soon the quicknesses will sew

themselves back into my skin, the daily grids and patternings sewn back.  
But for now I can feel this Pause of Dark—and how it wraps me—  
its scales not weighted with the heaviness  
of measurement or calculation.  
The houselights on the mountain carve out of the night  
their small, insistent harbors.

Goldfinch, Evening Grossbeak, where have you gone to  
now that your absence sweeps the sky? What keeps custody of you  
in these hours before morning?  
Your absence is a place I wander through,

here where *all thought is afterthought*,  
this earth unmoored, there are no moorings here—  
and then, come morning, the newspapers will be dropped off  
with their headlines and their captioned photos, and then, and then,  
the minutes will fill with things, my eyes in sunlight