

Shade

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On a horizon
almost unmarked by shadows
or shapes
float ghosts of poems recited
tea-times planned for
knees scuffed
and flowers plucked
the wind that carries them
full of unnatural smells.

Only a solitary tree-shadow
breaks the line between earth
and sky
beneath it
shapes in the brown
hint at the folds of a dress
the tiny fingers of a hand
clutching grass
that was once green
under a sky once blue
hint at the light weight
of a black-strapped shoe
the curve of a leg, even
a cascade of hair.

It is a twisted octopus, this tree
a black stick figure
fleshless and waterless
but flickering faintly over black-bleached bone
a memory of leaves
and blossoms
hovers like heat.

They still call it Alice's Tree,
though no one remembers why
yet the black husk provides shade
for a fallen ribbon
stained and crumbling
in the dirt
and for the marks in the grass
the imprint
that calls to mind
a dreaming child.