

Night Myths

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Sleepless with fever,
under one small lamp you stared
at a cherrywood cabinet, dark whorls
spiraled like galaxies and polished
to hold any light.
What your eyes saw and what they imagined
became equal in that space, circled
in immense night by the lamp's halo.

In the six-foot span of wood
you found no seams or scars,
though surely they were there,
part of elf faces and falling streams,
cliffs shaggy with moss.
It didn't matter whether visions
came from fever or from some code
tapped in the wood grain—
they floated you through wilderness droughts
of childhood, where lodgepole and aspen
grew thinly upon slopes;
near forest flowers
that bloom for one day only,
whose pale names you could not recall.
They rose even from the patchwork:
Grandmother's scraps seamed
into oak leaves—calico cotton.

You know about conceits, the ego
seeing itself linked
with plants. So those nights
as you moved into wood after wood
you repeated words like ritual:
Arms are not limbs, emptied.
Blood is not sap
relearning the climb. Fallen trees
leave no bones
dissolving into forest floors.
You are only an ill mind straining at blackness
under a small, incandescent light. *e*