

## Not Far Off Trail, Late Summer

*Dixie Partridge*

Where deep water widens and silks past  
the river island, you move through tall grasses  
downhill riverside, crouch through overhang  
and find yourself beneath a great  
low catalpa, broad leaves

like manna being offered—palms of hands  
raised: bright sky in small patches,  
slender fractals without glare,  
trunk almost horizontal, close over water  
where the river levels out, lake-like,  
surface movement a faint solace  
against the heaviness of August.

The shade is softly fluid, a tented space,  
and despite the world pressing down hard,  
the translucent green strength of this arch  
holds everything back.  
Visible stones shallow off shore  
give out luster from settling light.

A single bird cry: lo - iy - iy - iy  
then silence,  
and a sense you've come far.  
The coved stillness here  
is a cradle; small lappings back and forth  
move without strain  
against a pebbled shore.