

Rosalie Hendon

Bus Journal

The bus windows are cloudy.
Tiny stars shine from every windshield.
The heat is visible as haze.
Trees are meager respite.
I search for shade under street signs and lightpoles.

Who's here because there's no better alternative?
Is anyone here for the company
or the coolness of our rattling, encapsulated air?
A bubble swirling down High Street,
a blood cell in Columbus' veins.

We don't resemble the models on the windows.
We are grizzled, limp with fatigue.
We are proud, watchful, our chins jutting.
We call everyone 'baby.'
We tolerate delays in silence or else muttering.

We are close-knit.
We view newcomers with quiet suspicion.
We've ridden this bus for years.
We've never met.

Gulthias Tree

You kneel in the loamy soil before the altar
Vines cover its surface
A deep reverence wells from within you,
a shock of recognition as the vines
make their way toward you, twining up your legs

The tree requests your help
You can't refuse, its dark power flooding your veins
Hurriedly you plant, cultivate
Thinking only of the tree
Your companions don't understand
They arm themselves against you,
hack at the boughs, the vines

Each loss you feel acutely
aching like the loss of a limb
You draw them off, down in the catacombs
Let them make of your body a target
While on the floor above, you continue to grow, stretch, extend

In desperation you release the stopper
to the flask you carry,
a demon from the abyss
Room swirling with darkness,
it attacks all inside, including you
The distraction is worth the price
Your vines connect, the tree rises
darkly, from the ruins
to retake, reclaim, its place

You become one with the tree
Eyes seeing everything
All bow before its power
Sweet, gentle darkness overtakes them,
returning them to soil

Note: This poem was inspired by the boardgame Betrayal at Baldur's Gate, Haunt 6: Gulthias Tree.

Do the Right Thing

With disappointment comes more tests.
Invisible laser-wires to vault over.
“I know you’ll do the right thing,” you say.
And I don’t know if it’s
encouragement or threat.