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Marking Time

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Marking Time

There will be an unusual shifting of the trees,
 the angles not so sharp anymore,
 a sort of chaos that you knew would happen,
 causing the Earth's revolutions to slow down,
 every clear image to lose its focus at the edges.
 The creatures will all become larger
 and move into the open spaces, out into the field
 or the center of the lake, rising to the surface,
 humbling themselves in dejection,
 their necks curved downward,
 heavy in the spine,
 their hindquarters drooping like clouds
 or their scales being untimely shed.

Someone will try to recall a movie like this,
 some scene in black and white
 where the soldiers' boots are thick with mud
 and the sun is obscured by the smoke coming from the hills.
 Where the birds have fled to find a fresh worm
 or a newly hatched insect.
 Where the only singing comes from broken branches.

Everyone becomes a watcher.
 The man disappearing over the hill is wearing your shoes.
 You used to listen to him scold his children.
 You have seen him knot his tie,
 fiddle with the car on his day off.
 You have known his footfalls
 and can keep pace with them now in your head,
 the rhythm steady like the gentle rain
 you knew as a child,
 the ticking of your father's watch,
 the rub on the tire of your son's bicycle.

The parts of the world hold their positions
just long enough, before another gust of wind
passes its hand over the grass
or the sun touches the windows of a speeding car.
And all muscled things find their way back to shelter,
nodding to themselves,
something gone from their stomachs,
their minds, tiny or great,
filled, bulging with some new knowledge
they cannot speak of.

James Langlas