Winter 1994

Abundance

Lisa Fishman
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You say perhaps birch trees
enclose the clearing we have in mind; I say cartwheels
turn over like stars, like the tops of blue houses on fire
or long hair streaming behind birds on their way to nest.
Lately they've been swooping down on peoples' heads
in San Francisco,
desperate for lack of brush or trees.
Have we come yet to the clearing

of odd light that equivocates the past and present, say,
or belief and desire?
If the latter two come down to the same thing, I must
tell you
I rode a silver bicycle today, I bought groceries.
Later in my car I ran over a bird sitting in the road. The
light was green
but I would have stopped had I seen the bird
one second before. Split
this image (the green light) into hours,
days, the beginning

of more hours and days, but stop at the plumb line falling
straight
down the wall from which the mind descends: for
instance and
for instance . . . If we see further
into the past it contradicts desired forward motion—but
who would disbelieve
in claims to see what hasn't happened yet? Imagine believing

that human hair around the fruit trees would keep salt-tongued deer on the outskirts of the orchard, that they would take the scent of a thing for the thing itself. That summer we had one plum tree left, so much sweet bark chewed down to almost nothing. We got the hair from beauty shops in town and from the school bus I saw auburn, blonde and brunette tresses matted on the ground. The truth is I did not wonder which women were partly wound around our trees, it was too hot, if you remember—the heat riding waves of sweltering light all summer and all fall and the asparagus growing wild, growing all the way to seed.