

MARGO WHEATON

NIGHTSHADE CLIMBING LIMBS OF WHITE BIRCH (EXCERPTS)

On the beach, a sudden
black-emerald glint:

bone-wheel of a ravaged
crow flickering on a seaweed mound.

We know it. Love is
a pirate's flag;

a wind-
torn wing.

Every ransomed moment's a prism
caught and held inside a palm.

Learn to weather hard rain—what's
untarnished gets whelmed,

buried. Revealed
again.

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I'm still here. The beach town's deserted. All
the green and coinage gone.

In the morning, light rouses reed-heads in the marsh:
a glittering drawer of polished tines.

On the shore road, a gift—
the slender book a bark-slab makes;

the artistry
of empty sheets.

Dare to peel things back. There's
magenta on the underside. Real blood.

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You say you'll come, then don't. I tell you
I'll be here, then leave. Stars

reeling in their fiery dance. Above us,
all the music's found.

Damn this season, this catwalk
across a chasm,

the narrowing
of the coming days.

Take my hand and spin me
back to a time of glassy jade.

Tonight, the bare, big field's
a bowl. Echoes—

echoes—I'm tasting
your voice.

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Be careful. This is a trance state,
a fugue. Ophelia's death stroll through wildflowers.

All day, I walked through
the steady rain. All day, I walked through the sky of your absence.

Late at night, in the cabin rafters, the hard wind rolls
like a child's body surfing known hills.

In cider-coloured water, collapsing
rushes buckle and swoon.

What is it we'll
give to each other? Words.

Trust the field's
better speaking.

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Listen: in the dark, the hollow
clack of cattail stalks against each other—

beige pages
erasing themselves.

You're gone.
The hours stretch like wasted dancers.

Moon, sun. Bodies
pirouette alone.

Drown all the words in the ocean;
the only true poem is the current's race and return.

The day's unwound. I force
myself to walk the starless road;

my skin's
disappearing in air.