



Woodbury, Connecticut

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## sandy lee carlson

### The Shadow of Hawks' Wings

The cuts remain as scars  
Above the base of the oak tree  
Where the tree guy  
Attempted "to give me light"  
Twenty years ago—  
Before I flew out the back door  
And told him I had no need  
For all this damned light  
But that I did need the birds and the bugs  
That required this tree.  
He stopped and said, "Okay"  
With the shrug of a tree guy  
Who had no interest in taking on  
An ungrateful madwoman  
And let his supervisor know.

Since then the cuts have healed.  
The frost crack at the base has healed over, too,  
To leave space for a family of chipmunks.  
After a good day of rain,  
A stream of bird feeder debris  
Flows from the space back toward the feeder.  
I sit 50 feet away  
Many summer mornings  
Under the canopy of this tall and slender oak.  
Lately, a pair of red-tailed hawks  
Have taken to watching  
From a nearby tree the  
Activity around this space.

Hawks, I thought, were loners.  
But there you are.

("Shadow of Hawks' Wings" continues)

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I become aware of them  
At their leave-taking  
As their wings spread wide  
With a flap and the press of their bodies  
On the summer air  
Whispers their departure,  
They cast shadows  
On the bird feeder  
Over me, and for a moment,  
Over the small, sleeping animals within  
Who know the power of trees  
To sustain life,  
All of it.



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### Take Your Seat

Under an apple tree whose crutches lift ancient limbs,  
Sprawling and resplendent, to the sun, limbs  
Cloaked in ivy so thick that it cools this summer day,  
A white garden chair bleeds rust through cracks in its paint,  
The twisted and welded work of mortals  
Among hosta, coleus, phlox, and lilies curling their way  
To the brazen arms of Helios.

Take the seat, and you'll face the corner of the house  
Erected by Gideon Hollister in 1700,  
Not long before a maple took root in the northeast corner  
Of the yard, grew tall and straight and vast,  
And you'll see the gray of the clapboards  
Under layers and shades of peeling red paint.

The chair will hold you well enough,  
But stand up and look around.  
What does it mean to be eternal?  
The gods will have their way.  
Watch the chipmunk, his mouth full of seeds you cannot name,  
Doing Demeter's work boldly as he crosses your path  
For the safety of the boxwood hedge to a secret place by the stream.

Sit down again as  
Yellow swallowtails feast on milkweed  
And the black, on butterfly bushes,  
Their top wings doing hummingbird work  
To keep balance on the blossom.  
Watch all this from your chair  
That will rust and weep  
As it surrenders to the vines that reach under the cover  
Of expansive lilies, cracking the finish, reducing the chair  
To minerals. All that hammering and twisting,  
Welding and holding in place will come to nothing.  
No pose left to hold, it will dissolve into the  
Topsoil, elemental earth, a final repose.