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Trembling on the Brink of a Mesquite Tree

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Saito: Trembling on the Brink of a Mesquite Tree

TREMBLING ON THE BRINK OF A MESQUITE TREE

Brynn Saito

And the Lord said *Surprise me*, so I moved to LA.
After packing my posters and scrubbing the bathroom and bidding goodbye
to the permanent circus, I drove through The South
with its womb-like weather, and I drove through the center
with its cross-hatched streams, and the century unspooled
like a wide, white road with lines for new writing
and the century unspooled like a spider's insides
and the country was a cipher, so I voted my conscience.
And the country was a carton of twelve rotten eggs.
And the country was a savior—come deliver us from evil!—
and my car burned a scar across the back of an angel
and yes, I was afraid. No I've never gone hungry, but I've woken alone
with a ghost in my throat and I've been like the child
who's sure she perceives some creature in the dark—
some night-breathing thing—and I know there is something I can almost see . . .
But the future's a bright coin spinning in sunlight
so fast that it's sparking a flame in the grass, and who knows
where they'll find me—on which sunken highway?—so I'm writing this poem
to remember my name. And I'm writing this poem
to let something go, in the mode of surrender, since God
needs a ritual, like kissing needs another, or a knife needs the softness
of a melon in summer, and leaving New York is like leaving
the circus, and entering America is like entering a fortress,
flooded by soda and we float to the bars in our giggling terror
and driving from one shore across to another?
That's one sign for freedom, one small stab at change,
so when the Lord said *Surprise me*, I moved to LA.