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May Run

Cleopatra Mathis

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May Run · *Cleopatra Mathis*

This then is permanence and what a pity—
nothing saved in all of earth and water.
Enough evidence in my brown hand,
good dirt that I am
though the veins pop blue:
age in the mottled thigh and face's
swell. I've got enough sweat
for the five foot snake, my broomstick
wrestle, the flip and slide away.
Enough to dodge the swallow's slant
panic, bat-darting for the nest
in the porch eaves.
I can make it a wet mile
past the fat woman in roses.
Even I'd be fat in roses. I'd come back
to the sure grief of possibilities
all in the name of renewal.
It's not courage, is it,
but winter poverty that sends us out
into the water that never quits
the roadside. The land won't keep
this flood. The bees' white box,
dumb with buzz, finishes the orchard's
furled red. And we seize
on this profanity of longing:
my friend with his bad marrow, and I
with an anger to waste.

—for Tom