

1974

# The Disaster Tree

Albert Goldbarth

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Goldbarth, Albert. "The Disaster Tree." *The Iowa Review* 5.2 (1974): 12-12. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.1712>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact [lib-ir@uiowa.edu](mailto:lib-ir@uiowa.edu).

## THE DISASTER TREE

In the land of the blind  
the shade of this tree stretches  
farther than the eye can see.  
Its roots run deeper than mere defoliation

knows; and even diseased and cut  
to a stump, the least half-inch left  
level on dirt is the base of a magic space  
leading the eyes up

the tree the blind see, to where its invisible  
birds sing inaudible notes of hope;  
its xylem are still cocked toward heaven.  
And even when we fall to our knees

the paper-thin skin  
covering the patella is a minimal cushion  
we mustn't deny, for in retrospect  
it suffices. This poem written on the dead

trunk, on paper, is for the deflowered  
flower-girl whose boyfriend may yet do her  
justice, insurance, legal heirs, and joy;  
this poem is for the proposing boyfriend

whose kneel is forced, but who may one day rise  
into his wife with a true love, the force  
of which needed such a long distance  
runner's start; this poem to say the depths

of despair are where the lowest root drinks  
underground streams, and continues  
past disaster; this,  
a love poem; this extended conceit, a note of hope:

the tree surgeon falling limb to limb:  
when he lost his eyes, he read bark with his fingers.  
And when he sawed off his hand, the stump  
of his arm could still point, and beckon, and stroke.