May Run

Cleopatra Mathis

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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