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Long, Disconsolate Lines

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Long, Disconsolate Lines · *Jane Cooper*

in memory of Shirley Eliason Haupt

Because it is a gray day but not snowy, because traffic grinds by
 outside,
because I woke myself crying help! to no other in my bed and no god,
because I am in confusion about god,
because the tree out there with its gray, bare limbs is shaped like
 a lyre,
but it is only January, nothing plays it, no lacerating March sleet,
no thrum of returning rain,
because its arms are empty of buds and even of protective snow,
I am in confusion, words harbor in my throat, I hear not one confident
 tune,
and however long I draw out this sentence
it will not arrive at any truth.

It's true my friend died in September and I have not yet begun to
 mourn.
Overnight, without warning, the good adversary knocked at her door,
the one she so often portrayed
as a cloud-filled drop out of the cave's mouth, crumpled dark of an old
 garden chair. . . .
But a lyre-shaped tree? yes, a lyre-shaped tree. It's true that at
 twenty-four
in the dripping, raw Iowa woods
she sketched just such a tree, and I saw it, fell in love with its
 half-heard lament
as if my friend, in her proud young skin, already thrashed by the
 storm-blows ahead,
had folded herself around them,
as if she gave up nothing, as if she sang.