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# POETRY

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## ARBOREAL ANECDOTES

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Shandra Clark

At night, the trees tell stories.

At night,  
the wind rattles cars,  
and the rain slaps the pavement,  
and we stand  
with our feet  
sunk three inches deep  
into the freshly-wet grass  
and the trees whisper,  
but they also  
listen.

We hear  
our own lives  
blasted back  
with the sounds  
of drizzle on leaves,  
and wet rubber  
on the wet road,  
and wise trees  
in light breeze,

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and we can't  
bring ourselves  
to listen.

Our stories live  
and they linger  
gingerly wrapped  
around every single leaf,  
hugging blades  
of grass,  
caressing ears  
as they are carried  
on the wind,  
drawing the shade of night  
and lifting it again  
and we still  
can't listen.

There are memoirs  
carved into tree trunks;  
there are romances  
written in sets  
of muddy footprints;  
there are comedies  
etched into the night sky;  
there are tragedies  
spread across  
soaking city streets;  
and even  
when we try,  
it's still so hard  
to listen.

Orange street lamps  
illuminate the texts  
of our lives;  
leaves and branches  
glow with their secrets  
as we wander  
around at night,  
but even when they're right  
in front  
of us  
we still only sometimes  
listen.

I know we are afraid  
to read our own biographies  
spelled out  
letter  
by  
letter  
by rolling tires  
and shaking forests  
and smashed grass  
and sticky mud  
and maybe  
that fear  
is the reason  
we don't  
listen.

But when the trees  
shield our eyes  
with the dark of night  
and lean in close

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and tell their tales;  
when the sky  
wraps around us  
and gets into our souls;  
when the forest  
takes our feet by force  
but politely asks  
that we lend it our ears  
maybe  
just maybe  
we can try  
to listen.

# HE WISHED FOR SWITZERLAND

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Bailey Badger

First bloom of red-orange sweep  
recalls for the pass of photos  
of the lake and leather-soled ice skates  
dangling around your neck  
just shy of the afternoon radio blues—

The pluck of French short, gentle strings, and high horns  
scratch through the suspense of sterile plastic and soap.

You collect the winds  
as bitter as the shores of Versoix,  
at the final time we count,

un,

deux,

trios

and from your respirator  
you blow out the candles.