

## To Fall Toward the Sky

Some weeks ago, I found myself enchanted by the thought of climbing a tree. It was a soaring maple with long, smooth branches coming from its trunk, reaching for the cavernous autumn sky from where it sat atop a steep hill. I ascended quickly, a sense of weightless fluidity whispering through my bones, as if I were being drawn inexorably upward, falling into the heavens. My friend, waving up at me from her leaf-strewn lawn, was now barely visible, the fluttering leaves obscuring her face.

As I climbed just a little bit further, my view of the world became surreal. There, in the golden-hour sunlight, amongst the vibrant red leaves of the tree's crown, above the roof of my friend's two-story house, I felt so very alive. Just like Bilbo basking in the sun's glow and the freshness of the breeze after climbing a tree in Mirkwood, I reveled in the slight crispness of the wind, the chill it brushed across my face. As the leaves rustled against my arms and danced away into the sky, my gaze wandered over my neighborhood — the treetops now kissed with the colors of fall, swaying far into the distance.

I was dizzyingly high, and with no harness to tether me, I was ever so breathtakingly aware that I could die if I fell. The juxtaposition of fragility and wonder that washed over my senses, the gravity holding me down even as I fell to the skies, swirled like a kaleidoscope in my closed eyes. I was so impossibly mortal, so conscious of the pulse in my cheeks and the steady, gentle rush of air in and out of my lungs.

It was with an acute sense of melancholy that my leaden limbs retraced their path, the poignant echoes of that longing to touch the sky drowning me as soon as my feet were firmly planted on the ground.

Wisps of that ephemeral serenity still cling to me, winding silently through the fibers of my body. Though I may never again relive that blissful moment, I am certain that when my thoughts turn to dreams, I will find myself floating once more through the branches of a tree. I will rise with a zephyr when the leaves have just begun to change color and the world is breathtaking in its idyllic beauty — as if it were painted by the wind's Elysian hand, cradling me as I fall toward the sky.