

The Burden of Dumah

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With the first warm hour of April,
how long, how long, and what of the night?

Luminous stench, spring's birth-breath,
unraveling the silence of the dead

slack as a wet whip,
a buckeye-green garden hose.

Morning over the low hill
suffers like a tossed coin,

driving amber sunlight
through the window as deliberately

as a nail into the righteous,
quiet flesh of the angry washout.

Far off, impermanent in its empty age,
resting against the memory of its shadow,

a harrowed cedar, all knuckles and nubs,
lone, barefoot on the river bank

where the wind's breath lingers
like Lethe on the tongue,

grieving in its silent way
for the miserable unborn

journey, out into the faraway
fires of the horizon,

and what of the night? And what of the night?
Silence, the awful weight drags like ploughshares

through loam, running red with clay,
how long, how long, and what of the night?

Farmland fractured at such a distance
that the interstate slithers, smooth as darkness.*

Swift invasions of mimosa blossom,
a vulture circles in a cloudless sky.