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Falling

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Falling

By Rachel Zucker

Meandering through the redwoods,
creating our own path,
we stumbled upon a fallen tree.
Enormous, with the roots exposed
and protruding out into the shadowed light.
Fragrant with earth,
the bark was rippled with striations
of color like the bright stripes
of a barber shop pole.
You climbed up onto it with ease,
balancing with arms
outstretched—a tightrope walker
tiptoeing across the trunk.
You smiled and beamed at me from up high
as I looked back at you,
searching for a way to get up there
to be with you.
The giant extended lengthwise and made contact
with the soil, the area concealed by
fresh shoots and growth.
I pulled back the ferns, climbed up onto
the trunk, and made my way to you,
dodging branches, ducking under them
with clumsy hesitation.
I felt you take my hand and together
we stood in the center of the redwood,
staring down at the forest floor below us
scattered with pine needles and olive-green leaves
and escaped boughs.
You steadied my shaking body,
pulled me close, and pushed your lips to mine,
together, the two of us, silhouettes
in the fading light.