

OLD SAW

by Michael Finley

for Andy & Debbie

Out walking with Red, we came upon
an ancient cottonwood tree, standing like
a giant fork in the forest.

Into that fork another tree had fallen,
so that the original cottonwood stood straight
while the dead fallen tree leaned into its crux,
and every breeze made the live tree groan
as the dead trunk rubbed against it,
it was the sound of a balloon roughly handled,
or metal failing underwater,
like a natural cello's lowest string
rubbed raw of its rosin.

Eventually the dead tree had worked a groove
in the crotch of the live one,
and with the passage of time was wearing its way
downward, splitting it down the middle.

One main limb of the live tree has died,
and owls and birds and other things
have made their apartments in the soft dry flesh.

Rachel and I stared up at this natural saw
and we took one another's hands instinctively
as if to assure ourselves
that the rubbing of one life against another life
was a warming thing always.

But love can come into our lives and life move one.

What is left when love remains
sawing slowly on our limbs?

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