

Once upon a Time a Girl Believed in Magic

Amber Rookstool

She stood in the junction of a willow's
trunk, as far high as her wit allowed,
leaning against its skin, the hard bark
protecting her. She raised her hands

like the tree, reached as far as she could
on tiptoes and called for the summer wind.
Eyes closed, she breathed in warmed hope,
life of the willow's vines, she commanded;
he billowed, grazing her sun-pinched cheeks.

Holding her sturdy against his voice, he,
willow, and sun confirm her belief—
she controls him as she breathes.
The wind, it tells her, she is magic.



Autumn-Colored Memory

Amber Rookstool

Sun-washed in too much light, a polaroid
flashes wrong, the Eiffel Tower disappears,
the buildings we passed all blur when I remember
we met where *rue Boulainvilliers* meets *rue Ranelagh*.

We agreed to meet at the metro station,
but he got off one stop too late, and when
I finally found him I thought; this is him, and he
asks, what have you not seen. We ran hand-in-hand.

We pranced around the cobblestone
streets of an ordinary city named Paris—
a bookstore, a park, a rooftop—we sang
Country Roads and smelled of rose buds in late

spring; we fought a war with tissues packets,
and when we were done, he and I waited
on opposite sides of the metro, one
to *La Défense*, the other to *Ranelagh*.

Now as autumn cools the streets,
I have returned to the valley of Tennessee.
I cannot help but notice the leaves fade.
Our memories change color too, weaken,

feeble in the winds, whither in grass,
victim to rakes and crushing boots, crinkled.
I relive our time together, but like the leaves
you and I lay in broken pieces.



There Is a Yellow Rose on the Scroll of My Violin

Amber Rookstool

Four strings end and roll around the pegs,
stretching down the finger board, over the bridge,
never perfectly tuned or played. They end again
at the tailpiece's fine tuners.

I rest my chin
on the chin rest and dangle my fingers an inch
down from the nut on the neck. I place my bow
across the strings where the f-holes meet.

One stroke, and the violin with the yellow
rose on the scroll makes a screeching squeal.
A novice at age eight, I did not know the E string
could be so ugly.

I learned to play the violin from this old fiddle—
a hundred years old, and no one knows who made it.
Legend says, it was Pawpaw Patterson or Flanagan,
or one of their brothers or uncles, and they passed it
through their children until Pawpaw Clyde gave it to me.
Now when I play that violin with the yellow rose
on the scroll, I swear I hear the mountains of West Virginia,
the history of our family in the reverberation of strings.

