Two Poems

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Hemlock

From dark roots, strong as the centuries,
Slow as the slow hard thoughts of my brothers,
I rise. You do not know me.
At my feet the rhododendrons wrestle,
Climbing in tangles, twined above the path
That will not last; the playful maples
Stretch their laughing fingers to my face,
Age brushing ages; oaks, white and red,
Lead the simple birches in their lessons,
One, two, twig, bark, heart—
And the sky lights the green, growing silence,
The photosynthesis of purpose.

I have been ready all this time.
In seed and needle, trunk and branch, I know
A living Presence, a deeper radiance:
Thickening in rings, swelling in sap,
Gathering birds and wind and elements.
So in these last moments, hear my history:
From the first seed I have measured the sun,
Drawn the light down to the utmost core,
Released the shine to passionate hands,
Scattered the shadows in the web of lives.
And in the next bright moment I will shed the veil,
And see, and breathe, and leap across the world.
Poetry

I lined the Muses up against a wall
And shot them dead. Erato’s fading cries
Were pleasing music, something like the lies
Of lords and loves to keep themselves in thrall.
And then I was reminded of the tall,
Sleek, and handsome hero, the one with wise
And gentle hands, whose rippling pools of eyes
Expand in waves that could encompass all.

So anyway, the myths lay at my feet.
Strapping each corpse to its appointed slab,
I sliced the veins, extracted all that sweet
Celestial ichor, made each sample sure
In Pyrex tubes, then took them to the lab
To calibrate depiction’s dumb allure.