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AMANDA MERPAW

RHIZOMATIC THINKING

We're drinking coffee in January's
bed. It's raining. The harbour
hammers high at Lake Ontario.
What an inconvenience. The end
times, I mean. Can I unwelcome
the undoing? There's burning beyond
the cusp of our cups. All of it,
actually, on fire. Last year I learned
to love a woman. It's softer.
What do you carry? I'm a tree.
The tree is me. Listen, I'm short
on soil, breathing breath, watered
water. I'm scarred down to the bark,
the branches, the mosses. What part
of your body would you most want
to save from extinction? Yes, you
have to choose. We've just stopped
seeing other people. Look at us
emboldened. I know I promised
to stop sweet talking dystopia.
See the sun? Me neither. It's stuck
in the cedar, it swells my molars.
The seeds. I can show you a forest
sprouting in my back teeth. I can be
coniferous for you. Even here,
like this. The astronomers, do you
know them? They say the universe
expands too fast. I get it. I quicken
at the quickening. You pour Québec
syrup in my coffee. Swoon. You
woo me. Soon we will coo calamity.
I'd rather my lips stick smooth.
To be an alarmist and all, the source
of this system we're melting
makes moves to melt us back. Scatter
the matter of our minds. So I prophet
doom where I see it, even sweating
in your white sheets on this winter

solstice. A doom is a doom is a doom
is a doom. How can my spine be of use?
You say if everything is ending,
everything is also possible. Look,
I pressed a bouquet of cilantro
into these pages. The stems glow
so green. What now? I want to wake
and world alive like this, like we're
at the Berkeley Street Theatre waiting
for the first blackout, the beat
before the play begins, where you brush
my hand and anything can happen.
I tell you, I say, if only I could think
of a deer, see antlers sprout across
the air. Do you remember? From
the trail. After midnight. you weren't
there. Yes, I should have been asleep.
Everywhere the night smelled
like dandelion fluff, like that pale dust
off Lake Ontario. It was an August
or two ago now. Maybe even three.