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## The Secret of Fruit-Bearing Trees (for Malcolm)

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“It’s a secret my daddy teach me,” he said,  
sounding like a boy of ten.  
I saw him back then  
swallowed up in his daddy’s tall tops,  
sitting flat on the ground,  
his belly full, committing  
saplings to fertile holes.

“They bear fast that way –  
fruit big so weigh the branches down.”  
My daddy teach me.” The repeat,  
lingered, quivering  
in the shade of something unnamed.

We both looked at his hands:  
continents of strength, empty-  
promises of plenty. He laughed  
and tucked them away – that day.

I had only half believed his tale.

So when the story came, too late,  
of the axe that chased his bride  
until her heart withered and died  
from the terror he had planted there,  
I went out among the trees and sang  
lullabies to each trembling leaf.

Now I reap sweetness every season,  
still half-believing, still wondering  
what was her harvest that he so feared  
he could not bear.