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Sacrament of Grace

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Sacrament of Grace

Mary Dengler

I climbed the Rocky Mount, North Carolina, mulberry tree alone,
in the white softness of my summer dress,
my hair catching twigs along the way.
Perched on a branch among the birds and tiny bugs,
while my father preached at the Rocky Mount Baptist Church,
I feasted happily on the sweet red berries,
losing consciousness
that I'd been strictly forbidden
to participate un-baptized in the sacrament
or climb to pick the wild fruit.
Scratched and spattered with the sweet red juice,
I descended to the cooling darkness
as the Communion cups clinked from hand to pew.
Walking home in the Sunday evening summer dusk,
I passed "Amazing Grace"
As it floated over me from the open stained-glass windows.
I knew I would be punished
and those berries would never lose their power.

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