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Learning to Wait

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Learning to Wait

Like oak trees, the old ones
know to probe deep
through sand, clay, gravel,
sucking up life.

They know to finger through slate,
to inch along rocks,
creep past underground boulders,
to hold the moist earth tight,
deepening little by little.

Having learned to wait, in the spring
they know not to leaf out
until after the tiny elm fingers open,
until after the laurels blink their lashes
in the May breeze
and birch tongues gossip softly.

Having learned to wait in the fall,
they know not to drop
their leathery palms
until after the maples leaves dance
whimsically red on thin stems
and toss flames through the air,
until after willows sprinkle
gold on the river
and flirt with fall constellations.

The old ones whose strength
is in patience
know to wait,
know when to let go,
know with each year less
the ache growing deeper for more.

Helen Petter Westra