

The Light Changes

Snakes in a column slip into day
as the first wash of sunlight
spills suddenly over the trees
on dewy grass.
They announce themselves
with a sibilent bending of green stalks
beside the glassy lake,
pouring their silver bodies
in a steady stream of purpose
across my path—
no hesitation, no indecision
as they coil and stretch,
sling themselves
toward sun-touched trails
in the stand of trees beyond.

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At noon I find the migration
is still going on.
When the sun is high above me
snakes move in a very logical way:
a section of skin grips the earth
while the front part elongates
and the hind end contracts.
This is such a swift manoeuvre
it gives the illusion
of an outer and inner body,
one slipping magically through the other—
but in this bright time,
their trick uncovered,
they rush with simple instinct
for nests in undergrowth.

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The last golden flicker of day
is chilly: I do not expect to see
any more movement of snakes
in the growing shadows.

All is quiet.

Am I listening for it?

The rustle among grey twigs
startles, stills me.

Breathing pauses.

A single ghostly form slides
remote, implacable,
follows the same path,
rushes from twilight into dusk—
a sudden dash of white swallowed
in black.

Heather Gardam