

LAKE AND MAPLE

Jane Hirshfield

I want to give myself
utterly
as this maple
that burned and burned
for three days without stinting
and then in two more
dropped off every leaf;
as this lake that,
no matter what comes
to its green-blue depths,
both takes and returns it.
In the still heart,
that refuses nothing,
the world is twice-born—
two earths wheeling,
two heavens,
two egrets reaching
down into subtraction;
even the fish
for an instant doubled,
before it is gone.
I want the fish.
I want the losing it all
when it rains and I want
the returning transparency.
I want the place
by the edge-flowers where
the shallow sand is deceptive,
where whatever
steps in must plunge,
and I want the ones
who come in secret to drink
only in early darkness,
and I want the ones
who are swallowed.
I want the way
the water sees without eyes,
hears without ears,
shivers without will or fear
at the gentlest touch.
I want it the way it
accepts the cold moonlight
and lets it pass,
the way it lets
all of it pass
without judgment or comment.

There is a lake,
Lalla Ded sang, no larger
than one seed of mustard,
that all things return to.
O heart, if you
will not, cannot, give me the lake,
then give me the song.