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From Daphne To Fair Apollo

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Class of 2016

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From Daphne To Fair Apollo

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From Daphne to Fair Apollo

Pamela J. Thompson

When I was young I played in the woods by the river,
splashing my brown rubber boots
in the cold, grey water.
I pretended I was a nymph,
a daughter of Landon, the great serpent dragon
poised in far northern sky
all year long,
watching over me with fierce love and protection,
unlike my true father,
who spent the whole day locked away
in a room in the attic I wasn't permitted to enter.

I never thought of weddings,
instead I reached for my bow
and shot an arrow into the side of the house.
I was a hunter,
a tangle of blonde tied back by a loose ribbon,
a shadow in the rabbit's eye.
My face the face of a renaissance woman,
stolen from Raphael's *Young Woman with Unicorn*
my forehead high and wide, pressed out like the full moon,
my pale lips thin and downturned, my irises round blue-grey coins,
my body growing under me without my permission.
I wore the same clothes for years,
never noticing how they tightened around my chest and hips.

I never saw you look at me until it was too late.
I ran and ran,
but growing up by a river, one only learns to swim.
Eros shot you with love and me with hate,
a burden of lead buried deep in my chest—
too deep to be removed
so it poisoned me for a decade.
I called out to a father who would not hear me,
my arms reaching towards the heavens,

my hands yearning to grow out like branches, my fingers to leaves,
but no father, no god returned me to nature.
Instead you caught me hard in your rough arms
and carried me across your back to a bed I did not wish to lie on.

As seen on the Academy of American Poets website:
<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/daphne-fair-apollo>

from daphne to fair apollo
by Ela Thompson

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A year later I visited the Galleria Borghese in Rome,
the pearl mansion pressed against
a stark blue sky and a green hill.
I saw Bernini's Apollo and Daphne.
She stands apart from him,
body incased in lichen and bark,
panic and joy across her face
as her toes, roots, sink in deep.
She is safe.
Fair cousin, Apollo,
what I would give to be that stone:
to be white marble,
your hands never to touch me.