

Before I Die

I want to relive
the long, slow days of summer—
to be carried by time,
aimless as a fleck of straw
floating in a shaft of buttery sun,
to be lazy and sweet,
as caramel in the mouth.
I want to be like the white-throated sparrows

who know the language of the wind,
the trees and stars, who speak
the syllables of rushes and meadow grass
and understand the syntax of seasons,
who never worry about their own death
but who greet it like someone
bearing a great surprise.
I want to be like the deer

who need no watch or map
to step through the woods,
for whom the word *lost* has never entered
their vocabulary,
who have no place to go
because they are always there,
and who carry their stillness with them
like a deep pool of clear water.

I want to wade up a brook
mid-stream and feel the soft
brush of minnows nibbling my ankles.
I want to bask on a hot rock
and watch columns of compulsive ants
march across ridges of ruffled lichen.
I want to roam fresh fields,
counting petals and cornflowers

with nothing better to do
than nothing itself,
long after the nagging voice
of ambition has grown hoarse,
or perhaps, with luck,
has even learned at last
how to keep her big trap shut
and listen.

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