

# Not Quite a Mountain Slope

*Poem by Holly Day*

Elijah of the back yard, only crazy crabbed-legged prophets come here,  
it's just too high to be safe. Throngs of illiterates, possible heathens  
shake their heads and wonder, how's he gonna get down? How long  
will it take for his mother to realize what that crazy kid  
has done? There's a father in the picture  
but he's never around to build a proper treehouse, and this  
is where the treehouse would be  
if there was a Father to build one.

The cat can reach him, she can climb the tree just fine, she slithers  
through the leaves to the branch the prophet clings to, curls up beside him  
watches with concern. If he falls, she will disavow allegiance to his little corpse,  
possibly eat him, all memories of what had been  
between the two of them forgotten as her own ritualistic behaviors  
come into play. But the prophet doesn't know this, and he is grateful for the company.

He can see his mother in the kitchen through the window  
with the white lace curtains, she is washing the dishes  
singing to herself. If no one comes to get him  
he will have to stay up here, live his days out eating  
bits of fruit and seeds that birds bring him, sucking dew  
from the green tree leaves in the morning, chewing strips of bark to keep  
the hunger pangs at bay. If the cat stays, she will try to catch the birds  
that bring him sustenance, because that, too, is her nature. They will grow old  
together up here, in the crook of this tree. He will spend his days  
carving devotionals into the side of the tree with his fingernails  
fall asleep solving multiplication problems in his head  
preparing for pop quizzes that can only take place on the ground.



*Artwork by Natasha Phillips*