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## Dead Cottonwood Tree

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*Lavonne J. Adams*

DEAD COTTONWOOD TREE

*after Georgia O'Keefe, 1943*

Doused in early morning light,  
what remains of this cottonwood  
seems more regal than its lime-green  
counterpart, as if death has stripped it  
bare of pretension. This is nature sculpted  
by the unfathomable, a scene  
hovering somewhere between summer  
and fall, the sagebrush blooming  
in buttery yellow clusters.  
It will be hours before arid heat  
scours the siltstone, months before  
clouds drop their cold tongues of snow,  
years before this tree will weather away.  
A broken branch weighs less than bone,  
the wood surprisingly porous,  
yet the trunk has the splendor  
of uncarved marble, the solitary bough  
like an arm angled upward  
where a hawk or a falcon might land.