

2-14-2013

The Leaves Fall

Maren Taylor
Grand Valley State University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/amaranthus>

Recommended Citation

Taylor, Maren (1975) "The Leaves Fall," *Amaranthus*: Vol. 1975: Iss. 1, Article 14.
Available at: <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/amaranthus/vol1975/iss1/14>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Amaranthus by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

THE LEAVES FALL

The translucent curtains inhaled softly over the dresser, bearing the air of the meadow below. The sky was white with sun. In the center of the pastel pink room was a wooden crib from which a tender wax-like hand reached to grasp a stream of light. The sun moved unnoticed until it blanketed the new body.

Andra stopped outside the door and listened to the calm breathing of her child with the wind. She stepped softly into the grassy carpeting, to the crib, and pulled the tiny mass to her breast. She would have clutched that tranquility and warmth of her daughter all day, but there were laundry, dishes and floors to be washed. She replaced the fragile body into the sun and slipped out the door.

The next morning Andra heard a wet giggle from the little, pink room. She dropped the dirty sheets in the hall and hurried to her daughter. Julie sat in the center of the room, her legs curled inward, with a lady bug on the palm of her hand. The water of her eyes glistened toward Andra, and she giggled again. Andra looked disbelievingly at her year-old daughter, her fat flesh molded softly over the small frame. Her mind was dizzy and overtaken, until the laughter turned her head, which she shook, as though to jostle the brain to its correct position. Then, Andra stopped beside Julie and nudged the friendly bug across the tender flesh. They laughed until Julie tipped backward and dislodged the bug into the air. Julie pulled herself to a stand by her Mother's arm and hugged her. Then, she tripped excitedly to the lady bug. Andra went back to the hall and bundled up the sheets and continued downstairs.

The following day -- a mild Spring day -- Andra pulled on jeans and a smock top. She inhaled deeply through the screenless window, then ran to Julie. The little pink room was yellow now, and in place of the crib was a small, white-canopied bed, where Julie was a lump just below the pillow. Julie was four now, and Andra had to waken her to spend as much of this mellow day as possible with her. The consuming

time confused and frightened Andra. She was in a new reality. She brushed Julie's cheek with the back of her hand as she whispered her name. Julie's lids uncovered the smiling eyes.

"Let's go to the forest now, Julie." Andra brushed the light waves from her forehead.

"And the pond at the end, Mommy?"

"Sure."

Julie uncurled herself and slipped to the floor. She climbed into the striped overalls her Mother had laid on the dresser.

Their breakfast was rushed, neither of them interested in it, but they gathered lunch and dinner into a daypack with great care. They locked hands, stepped into the carefree field, which thrived around and far beyond the house. Running, they reached the airy forest, which they ambled through to the pond. Andra unlatched the pack and joined Julie, eyeing centipedes, slugs, ants -- whatever was beneath or around the rocks and logs.

The moon was out when they returned home. They sat on the rotted porch, their heads tilted. Silently, Andra prayed that everything would be alright for her little girl. Julie's head was supported against her shoulder, and deep, steady breathing came quickly. She cradled Julie, and settled her into bed. Julie curved herself into the fetal position.

Two voices were busy in Julie's room the next day. The voices sometimes divided into four, even five squeaky tones. Andra saw beyond the doorway an eight-year-old girl with strawberry fields reflected in her blond hair. She was kneeling on the floor with a friend. They were nudging frizzy-haired trolls around a hand-made papier-maché cave.

"Hi, Mom. Will you make us an apple pie with the apples we picked yesterday?"

"Sure." Andra held her face, trying to endure, to understand, the rapidity.

The girls hurried after her to the cozy kitchen to help. The three spent the day making apple jelly and pies.

The next day Julie was twelve, but Andra accepted and expected the change. Her daughter was becoming pretty -- a wholesome innocence in her face, her hair curved against her back. But the doctor insisted she would have to go for treatments every week and she'd have to take seventeen pills

a day. Andra had never given her more than vitamin pills until now.

Julie turned from the mirror to her Mother and smiled. She seemed to have noticed that Andra was starting to age, to exchange some of her worries for wrinkles. She finished the last of her braid with a concerned look and rushed out to school.

Andra sat on the bed, her face lightly wetted. She knew her daughter's smile had become tense, trying to conceal the growing pain.

"I must hold onto her. I have to," Andra said to herself.

"Hurry, Mom. I need you, Mom." It was morning. Julie was on the floor writhing in pain, with the graceful motions of a dying snake. Her long hair shadowed her face and twisted in opposition to her body. Andra pulled the blossomed girl against her. The milky air condensed on their faces. Julie's frame was content for a moment, but she again brought her knees against her stomach and tightened her arm over her mouth to smother the unsuppressable moans. Julie clutched her Mother, then she unlocked herself and whispered, "Mother, let me go. You must. I hurt so bad. Let me go."

The determination frightened Andra. She loosened her hold from the pleading child and ran into the hall.

The air cleared.

There was silence. Andra stepped lightly to see only the curtain brush softly over the dresser. Julie was gone. The sun was bright, and the meadow air floated in. An open bottle of lilac perfume dispersed from the dresser through the house.

Andra had let her go.

The night had been long, but rushed. The dream had exhausted Andra, but she was now content. Her daughter had needed to leave. It had been three years now. This was the first morning Andra felt satisfied. Her daughter had wanted to go, yet she had gone so fast.

Andra went to the window, then hurried for a walk to the pond.

/Maren Taylor/