What Your Lover Is Really Saying

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My upward bent legs beneath the blankets,  
in the gray light of the  
just before daybreak,  
make me think of The Madonna’s great legs: like  
half a giant hiding under a swell of marble fabric.

Her knees surge upward like  
two of Tethys’ ancient fingers,  
and the surface of the ocean rises with them without breaking  
to join the smoothly downward flowing stream  
that is her son’s dead body.

But she was no Titan:  
she was a real person.  
Could her legs really have held up  
all the troubles of the world lying there  
like a toppled Roman column across her lap?

She fell in love with a mortal man  
who could not understand why so many  
girls loved him.

He let her know that even she was really not  
so special, but one among many.

So now she laughs and sets loose the hounds on  
any unlucky  
who happens to stray too close.

And will end her life as a mound of  
dried leaves, blown away by the wind.

I need you like oxygen.  
I want to suck you into my lungs.  
push you through my roller coaster bloodstream  
until my entire body is fed.  
then spit your wasted cells out for the trees to fix.  
I want to say that you belong to me  
until you begin to resent everything:  
When I tell you, “No, you can’t go out with your friends.”  
the always automatic grip on your arm and  
the way I look at the moon like I own it.