

WHEN PRUFROCK FALLS IN LOVE

Walking down Belle Ave.
As the world shut down,
He inches ahead of his fiancée
To play their game of choice;
A scavenger hunt for the rooted, the lasting,
She playing *student*
Even after graduation.

She wants a turn,
Pointing out the wise green of the English Ivy.
Each signal, each SOS,
Met with phylum, class, genus, species
Promptly prompting
Actually, actually, actually.
Reducing ivy to *Hedera helix*.

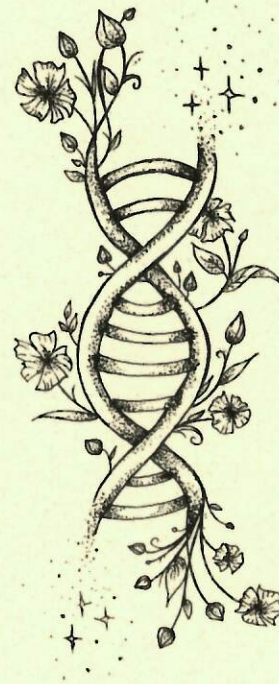
As he tries to translate her hope and hunger,
Into mutagen-free protein chains,
He catches her clawing at the ring
And holds her hand
With the urgency
Of a gardener
Waiting for spring,

She squeezes his hand
Before the elected shrine:
A Callery pear tree,
A long-limbed middle schooler
Hot-cheeked,
Naive with a coy flush in each petal,
New and holding on.

“How inexplicably lovely”
She tries.

He tries to transcribe her world.
Instead—always instead—

“*Actually,*
It’s *Pyrus calleryana*.”



Handwritten signature of Emmalene Rupp.

Emmalene Rupp



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