What Shall We Say When We Meet Again?

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What shall we say when we meet again?
We were young once
And thought time was forever.

Nineteen sixty-nine. I thought another year
Or two, we’d still love
Each other when we’d meet again.

What shall we say when we meet again?
You’d found Margaret, married her.
I kept waiting a few more years until we’d meet again.

What shall we say when we meet again?
You divorced. I married, expecting a child later
That year you visited, and we met again.

What shall we say when we meet again?
You’d grown gray, a clearer success.
I kept my head, worked harder, when we met again.

What shall we say when we meet again,
Now that you’re ash blown into the water,
Now that we’d never meet in life again?
Never shall we meet again.
Bad Dream, Good Dream

You sit straight up on the narrow bed, the bad dream re-chasing itself behind open eyes, down those artery tubes pooped with fat and pumping up the pressure of fifty years chasing one good dream after another. You sense the sly one, fox spirit, silver-tipped tail, her shining mouth glimmering, chasing you chasing her.

Round and round, desire runs from girlhood through thickets of thought, muscled loops, into the middle of life in the dark woods. And now the woods burn and smoke, take over. Still, mistress fox pads ahead, behind, beside, wearying familiar, till you consider: what is the good, what is the bad dream, where are you, riding the fox?

1Shirley Geok-lin Lim is Professor of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara, USA. She has published six volumes of poetry, a memoir, two novels, three collections of short stories and numerous academic articles. She was the first Asian woman to win the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize for Poetry in 1980, and has won the American Book Award twice, in 1990 and 1997.