

*Richard Collins / Vol. 14.1 / Winter-Spring 2024*

## **Hiking Fiery Gizzard**

*— for Leigh, Winter 2023, Tennessee*

Two streams converge in a wood of yellow poplar,  
By gravity led to some goal as yet unknown:  
This carved natural scene — so severe, so serene —  
Toppling-towering landscape of tacit fallen trees  
and loud waterfalls.

From divergent hidden springs, we have managed, strength  
Married to strength, through winter's melt and summer's drought.  
Boulders block the path yet never slow the downward  
Flow that feeds fragrant mosses with fractured moisture  
and faery-filtered light.

Bearded hemlocks, shallow-rooted, heavy-shadowed,  
Threaten us no more. Your crimson parka leads me,  
Faithful fool, to plunge headfirst into stony pools  
Until at last, here, we join forces on the furrowed brow  
of a mountaintop.

Nestled in the naked stone of winter, taking  
Stock and wisdomless, we anticipate the spring.