For nearly three millennia I’ve been stuck here, 
safe from mortal whims. 
The ability to be admired, but unnoticed, 
and mortal eyes slide over me on my bank so they can never hurt me, 
while death slides over me at the bid of one long-gone. 
Teaching me love through longing, 
hate through longing, 
despondence through longing, 
For my dear Apollo.

The first thing I realized, 
even through my panic, 
were my toes, sinking in the sand, 
writhing, reaching, burrowing like worms or asps, 
tapering eventually to nothing, 
grabbing and sticking me down tightly—
I guess that’s why they call them roots.

I cried at the sudden halt, my tears growing sticky, 
congealing, ruining my eyes, thickening my blood. 
—And my arms flew out above me, twisting, bone infiltrating every soft inch of flesh; 
hardening and caking into an ugly mess, 
veins blowing up through the skin and cracking apart like the ravaged earth herself:

My legs itched and caked and cracked as my dress crawled up me like ivy, 
Plastering itself like some deplorable moss until it and me were indistinguishable. 
A stiffness, horrifying, creeped up inside of me—
But no, it was merely my own body which was betraying me 
As dear Apollo looked on.

The golden hair on my arms curled up and out, browning and hardening, 
my fingers turned brown and stony—
The hair on my head twirled and flattened into leaves, my ears reached up like Pan’s and did the same, 
and juicy fruits swelled and popped upon my formerly sweet flesh. 
My dear beautiful face, the cause of my troubles, hardened and disappeared under the shell,

and I suffocated until I realized that I no longer needed breath.

Apollo blessed me sadly and made me his crown 
because I foolishly would not take his, 
and here I sit on my dead father’s bank. 
For nearly three thousand years I’ve waited here, 
seeing all, yet not seeing anything.
Blessed by the gods, saved by my father.
If this is what salvation truly is,
I’d rather have been hanged on one
such as Myself,
than be forced to dream eternally of my dear,
my beloved,
my Apollo.

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