High Requiem

Bill Tremblay
N/A, bill.tremblay@gmail.com

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HIGH REQUIEM

by Bill Tremblay

Smoke white as the priest’s cinctured alb rose with his call for us to shorten the sentences of the dearly departed. I saw millions of shadows wandering beneath mosaic floors, shuffling in gray catacombs where the old are left in storms whose end they know will come but never when. Blind ghosts bumped into slime walls, knocking over iron braziers of cold green fire. My dreams always play out under gray cathedral grounds. I hear voices lost in northern pines as I walked along the river among birches. Only they listened to my soul. I read gospels chiseled in black bark like Egyptian orisons singing up the sun. In the yellowed candlelit choir loft I saw those who lived before the flood, who loved before the halls of hell sprang loose, the unremembered sinners in my blood, my undocumented family who kneeled before the thrones of lust, the dead I carried for whom I lifted my eyes to ask if—among those flickers—some mercy could open the transept of God’s heart with syllables of intercession, one note on the organ that would awaken in future congregations a prayer for me in the arbor of my Gethsemane.