Lupus

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By Erin Elizabeth McConnell

On cumbersome trunks of elm, i stand,
fixed firm into dirt
by — not a root — but wounded immunity.
Dutch elm disease of my system’s own conception.
With swollen xylem and inflamed phloem,
my bark cracks, turns purple
as circulation ceases.

And i stretch —
or attempt to extend —
my lame limbs.
Steeped with numbness,
i can no longer feel
the movements, or existence,
of crippled twig-tips.

My leaves fall off,
leaving balding spots
where my foliage once
freely flowed.

Rotting from within,
the most paltry miasma
will level my resistance —
infectious vector of Zephyr.

And so i endure,
with a dull, hollow ache
that measures the meter of minutes;
hunkered-down
forever bracing
for pain:
my most faithful companion.
And soon, 
i will be no more 
than a frame 
of withered timber, 
Bereft of any splendor, 
cowering before the cold 
of winds and my limbs 
that can no longer hold 
onto hope that 
a thaw will ever draw near.