

## Barbara Pelman

---

### Magnolia

Beside the window, a star magnolia, bare  
branches, a few stubborn leaves  
once green, now edged with brown,

tips of the branches like down,  
like your head under my hands:  
blonde fuzz. Wide-eyed baby, eyes

that looked upon the new light  
like a conqueror, just landed  
on a blue shore. So long ago.

Now, we talk, we are careful to show  
only the safe side of our hidden worlds.  
“Don’t tell me that,” you warn, a fence

of silence, of things too tense  
to mention, even in a poem. The old leaves  
stiffen against the wind, rain

softens its fist, but for now, restraint  
is our only growth, one small white star  
at a time.