

leafmold paradise

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There's a place between two stands of trees where
the grass grows uphill
and the old revolutionary road breaks off into
shadows
near a meeting-house abandoned by the
persecuted
who disappeared into those shadows.

I've walked there picking mushrooms at the edge
of dread, but don't be fooled
this isn't a Russian poem, this is not somewhere
else but here,
our country moving closer to its own truth and
dread,
its own ways of making people disappear.

I won't tell you where the place is, the dark mesh
of the woods
meeting the unmarked strip of light—
ghost-ridden crossroads, leafmold paradise:
I know already who wants to buy it, sell it, make
it disappear.

And I won't tell you where it is, so why do I tell
you
anything? Because you still listen, because in times
like these
to have you listen at all, it's necessary
to talk about trees.

Adrienne Rich, *What Kind of Times Are These*,
1991