

The first cherry tree

İlhan Sami Çomak

In response to a poem for İlhan by John Macker, February 2021.

Translated by Caroline Stockford

You rightly say I've stayed so long in exile
in this well, the sun, never returning!
I still have a yearning within me for light.
I love the sun, and loop of the moon
Of which I see so little. Each spring the steam
files up from warming soil. I'm as far from spring,
soil and steam as a severed hand.

Still, I piece all I miss into a single picture.
Into that wounded bird called freedom.
I must do it, so I won't forget.
Life is severe, defiant and all walled
because I'm here. I say: the blossoms
of the first cherry tree, breaking into air,
How do they smell? Can you tell me this
and what their colour is?
I seem to have forgotten.