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Metamorphoses

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Metamorphoses

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Alive with possibility, Pygmalion's statue burst forth:
"My love," says he, "you live."
"I live," says she, "to love."
I do not know if you have ever lain with a sculpture;
Pygmalion had not. Nor did he entirely trust her body:
"Do you have a liver?" he asked.
"Does it matter?" she said.
It mattered, in the end. He had given her a mouth,
But little else—so when he served
The aged Falernian wine, she collapsed
As the fluid soaked her empty innards.
She did not spontaneously combust, though
This fiction would make the truth more interesting.
Rather, her tears at short life were fiery.
With all the alcohol and the wooden frames,
The artist's workshop was no more.
A pity he had not sculpted a phoenix.

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So Apollo tired of chasing stars and sibyls, and lusted for something novel:
Enter Daphne, who runs for a thousand miles without stopping—she is empowered
By anachronistic endurance drinks; she hops over the Parthenon, over Olympus,
Over Parnassus, swims the Adriatic, eventually finds the Yangtze and zips up
Past aging farmers, over Everest, reaching, at last, where she began;
Apollo, who has been waiting, catches her just as she falls, saying, "Thanks
To my corporate sponsors; this race would have been impossible without them."
But the god finds her supple and faint, open to his advances; she does not realize
She has been chasing herself. Enraged at her stupidity, a passing, grandmotherly divinity
Decides to screw with fate: let the god keep his pants on, and let the girl be a tree.
Thence Daphne, whose sweat-beaded skin was reflecting the Sun, grew;
Her feet became root and her nose the sky. She stands, brooding over Apollo's
Awkward position, like a half-virgin, half-plant, beautiful mess.

Sam Keyes