

## Orchid Fall

The heavy limb falls  
thirty meters through hothouse air  
shredding leaves and twigs.  
It falls like a lifeboat sinks.  
Communities of orchids cling  
as it plunges, impacts and shatters  
along the dry stream bank.  
The strident cicada song ceases.  
A mona monkey grunts and looks  
down,  
then continues to feed on scarlet *Xylopia* fruit.  
The cicada chorus continues.

“What have we here?”  
Dietrich ask, “*Bulbophyllum*?  
I see both monopodal and sympodal.”  
“Possibly, looks like *Polystachia* too.  
Do you find an inflorescence?”  
Duncan rips up pseudobulbs,  
“Typical African orchids,  
minuscule brown flowers.  
You can see why they are not much  
loved.”  
He tosses specimens into a collecting  
bag.

Shafts of equatorial sunlight wither  
the scattered leaves, wrinkle the  
pseudobulbs.  
Black ants scavenge the wreckage.  
White beetle larvae, molds and fungi  
work within the wood.  
Other leaves, green, brown and silver-  
backed fall along the stream bank.  
Probing tree roots, entwining tendrils  
with fungi threads,  
reach up hungrily into the moldering  
manna.

