

THE FOREST OF ANYKŠČIAI

Stump-littered hillocks, desolate and bare,
Can anyone believe you once were fair?
Where are your former charms? Where did they go?
Where is your humming when the wind would blow
And toss the white-wood foliage to and fro
And rock your pines, as centuries ago?
Where are your birds and nestlings to be found
Whose chirping such contentment spread all round?
Where are your living creatures large and small,
The burrows and the lairs that housed them all?
All, all has gone: in the deserted plain
A few disfigured pines alone remain.
With needle, cone and twig the earth is strewn –
A barren waste the sun bakes hard in June,
A sight the soul views with as much distress
As ruined palaces rank weeds possess.
Or heaps of rubble where a town once teemed,
Or bone-dry moss where marshland softly gleamed.
Once walking here you found your eyes would ache:
The forest would your soul so merry make,
Your heart so glad you wondered in surprise:
Where am I – in a wood or Paradise?
All that surrounds you with such beauty glows!
With every scent the forest woos your nose
And lively sounds you hear in every part.
You sense a deep calm soothing to the heart.
Here moss has strewn for you a soft-sprung bed
Inviting you to lie and rest your head.
Fruit bushes green as rue beside the track
Their juicy berries offer, red and black.
Here button-mushrooms in the setting green,
Reddish or grey of their estates are seen.
From under their moss blanket shyly peep
The chanterelle funnels wakening from sleep.
Here thrive the mushrooms that are nicknamed “swine”,
While others round as plates lie flat and shine.
Here under firs bright saffron caps abound,
Here green russula break through frosty ground.
Brown, blue and grey ones gaily congregate
With nothing to disturb their natural state.