

1-1-2024

## Tree Hollow

Erin Goudie  
*Messiah University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/peregrinereview>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Permanent URL:

---

### Recommended Citation

Goudie, Erin (2024) "Tree Hollow," *The Peregrine Review*: Vol. 37, Article 39.  
Available at: <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/peregrinereview/vol37/iss1/39>

### Sharpening Intellect | Deepening Christian Faith | Inspiring Action

Messiah University is a Christian university of the liberal and applied arts and sciences. Our mission is to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society. This content is freely provided to promote scholarship for personal study and not-for-profit educational use.

## Tree Hollow

*Erin Goudie (Education 2025)*

I am permanently hollow.  
 My chest—carved clean  
 out and aching, attacked  
 by bacteria and fungi,  
 my sapwood exposed  
 & chilled by crisp autumn air.  
 Some trees self-prune, some say—  
 it's a marker of maturity  
 to remove lower branches.  
 I say it's some sort of homicidal shit.  
 Because most tree hollows  
 are actually caused by injury:  
 fiery lightning strike or  
 wind or limb breakage  
 rots away the tree-flesh  
 and the decay takes over  
 a hundred years to cavitize—  
 so what does it take for a tree  
 to break its own limb?  
 For us to remove another?  
 Trees seasoned with age,  
 their maturity marked  
 by the tree hollows, by the negatives  
 of cannibalistic carnage;  
 empty space where sinew  
 and phylum once joined  
 another—limb to body,  
 an extension of the self—  
 now nothing but broken  
 tree-flesh left to rot and heal.

I offer an ode to the lower branch  
 removed. I don't know  
 if the branch broken is you or me,  
 but I know pruning prevents  
 codominant stems. Some say a tree trunk  
 has room for but one leader.  
 Well we cut the strong  
 lower branch so that the other could grow  
 unhindered, as it always ought.  
 I'm still in the hundred years—  
 but I have hope for when  
 my hollow heals. Though this ache  
 is as permanent as the holy earth  
 that my toes are tangled in,  
 I know once soil frosts  
 and winter dawns,  
 my hollow can be home  
 for kestrels and chickadees,  
 swallow, sparrow and opossum.

