

Tree Climber

How shall I be able to recite . . . the escaping immediate Death on a surprise, I being the moment before in perfect health, a Fall off a Tree where I was sitting in contentment. That had seats on the Tree, easy to go up in. Yet, in return, I fell from a height about 3 4 yards to the ground, which bruised my face of the left side. And my Right Thumb put out of joint. So that I lay dead at present and had not the least sense of my falling. Yet it pleased my God to send two women who saw me fall; which if they had not seen me fall, the Hedges and bushes would have made me undiscovered to any and I do not know but I might have lain more than a day in that very lonely place. These women had then come a mile from their dwelling . . one of them was unwilling to come because that tree had frightened many a person that it was haunted with sprites, and the fearful woman took me to be one. Yet by the confidence of the other they came and found me without any sense.

. . . .

Thus it pleased my God to be my deliverer.

. . . .

On my Fall off the Tree.

It might have been a fatal Tree,
And my last act's catastrophe.
Yet all ways from that remote part,
My Genius ever did divert
An uncouth way as if dark owls
And dismal night Birds made had controules.
At last was thwarted by my Fate
T' approach that most unhappy bait.
Laid to entrap: If Fame say right
A receptacle 'twas did Fright.
Revolted spirits that place did haunt
(Yet some are of opinion can't).
What were those foes? For what conspire?
I have not Logicke to enquire.
I can't detirminate that thing
Onely a supposition bring:
Admit the crew of Beelzebub
Waighted my rival with their Club,
And that the regiment of Hell
Had there conventred out a spell
To make my Traverse more replete;
And more than earthly foes to meet.

The plot was broke, and Heavens bright eye
Dissolved their black Confederacy.
Then came the help of my great guide
Who took notice I did slide
And the blessed spirits attended.
Then was seen how they befriended,
Then from the brink of death did save;
Another life at instance gave.
The same life, Lord, let me for ever lay,
And hence forth dedicate both night and day,
T' exalt thy praises which so much abound;
In all my preservations do resound.

Katherine Austen from 'Book M'. Text roughly modernised. For a better text from Sarah Ross ed., *Katherine Austen's 'Book M'* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2011), p. 150, and for a better modernised version see Pamela Hammons, *Book M: A London Widow's Life Writings* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2013).