

## Wilderness House Literary Review 10/2

*Carolyn Gregory*

### **ESPLANADE (for Rosemary)**

We followed cobbles down the avenue  
where soulful dogs walked.  
Joy spilled out along the topiary  
and orange petaled roses.

We descended to the river,  
sparkling fire on dark blue.  
Sailboats darted across the harbor  
with water wings.

I remembered the photo I had seen  
of a cottage with its bright blue roof  
rooted in a forest of yellow leaves  
and how the philosopher wrote  
very little is needed for a happy life.

Out on the water, two red sailboats  
glided by two white  
when you told me  
how your neighbors claimed money  
for roofing on your home  
they did not complete,

how your trust was broken  
when they tried to sell you  
aluminum siding and sunken windows.

Let the light fill the holes where pain settles,  
free us both to let our sails unfurl around us,  
drifting among docks  
no longer moored to holding us back.

WHEN ROME IS BURNING

My mother told me to study my face  
as if it were a map of the ocean,  
giving me an ivory mirror to study  
the curves of hair falling in golden waves.

She told me this would be my fortune,  
that it might carry me to the Indies  
even in bad times like this  
when Rome is burning and we are forced  
to swallow emeralds and rubies to survive.

I shaved my head bare like a monk  
to escape the flames  
and moved to the water world of Venice.  
A ruby or two bought a gondola  
so I could sail and survive at the same time.

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### WILLING IT ALL

After the peach and golden mansion was built  
with hand-carved chandeliers  
and deep red tapestries,

after years spent building  
America's mighty circus  
showcasing Tom Mix and elephants,

we celebrated the end of the Great War  
with soirées at night  
near pelicans at the bay.

My sweet Mable died  
at the young age of fifty four.  
Though I had weathered the Depression,  
life had not prepared me  
to lose her so soon.

The golden mansion's luster hammered down,  
sold off my yacht to keep the lions fed,  
keeping my right hand in all my affairs.

When the magical Twenties ended,  
I left everything to Florida.