

Wilderness House Literary Review 11/1

Catherine Keller

No

I always envisioned myself being a vanquisher,
A soldier of society,
Bringing evil to its knees,
And justice to its feet,
I never wanted to be the damsel in distress,
I wanted to be the heroine,
Not the helpless.
But 'be quiet' and 'shut up',
Made me believe otherwise.
People have tried to muffle me for too long,
Either out of arrogance or fear,
But I will not be silenced,
I will not be ignored.
I should not be ashamed to be an advocate,
I have every right to be passionate,
About what I put on paper,
I am a warrior,
Who went from stuttering to screaming.
There has always been an internal flame,
Fueled by the desire to fight,
The others struggle to ignite a single spark,
But I can breathe fire.
I used to crave my future coffin,
But now I stay alive just to spite them.
I am a daughter, a friend,
A writer, a girlfriend,
An activist, an independent,
I am a survivor, a fighter,
A feminist, a hedonist, a pacifist, and a punk.
I have a voice,
I am stubborn,
I am beautiful,
And I am unstoppable.

Wilderness House Literary Review 11/1

My words declare war,
My opponents are those who want my mouth sewn shut,
Even when my smirk says enough.
Be hard, but do not forget who you were,
Before you turned to stone,
Be soft, but only to those,
Whose souls feel like satin,
And although my job is to play with words,
My favorite one is still,
No.

Wilderness House Literary Review 11/1

Here's Your Sign

You didn't want them to find you,
With bullet holes or a wringed neck,
Less of a mess to clean up,
Less of the hassle you thought you were,
And when the doctors slice you open,
And find intestines filled with pills,
Mouths will drop and tears will spill.
Your parents will keep your bedroom door shut,
Because they will get nauseous just from walking passed it,
It will take months before they are ready,
To pack your clothes in cardboard boxes.
They will have to clean out your locker,
And throw out the birthday present,
They never got the chance to give you.
Your house will be a shrine,
Quick glances at your pictures on the wall,
Your mom will be beside herself,
Thinking she could have done something more,
Your friends won't talk to anyone for weeks,
Your brother and sister wouldn't dare venture into your room,
Just like you told them to do,
It will be as if yellow caution tape,
Is wrapped around everything,
That reminded them of you.
Too many 'sorry for your losses'.
Your parents will never get to hug you when you graduate,
Congratulate you on your wedding day,
Or hold your firstborn child,
You will never see who you wanted to be.
Your favorite songs and movies will be strictly avoided,
Because the memories of you will be too fresh,
No matter how much time has passed.
You said to yourself,

Wilderness House Literary Review 11/1

'At least they won't have to pay for my college,
Just my coffin'.
No grandparents should have to be,
At their grandchild's wake,
Praying for revival.
You will be dressed up in your favorite sweater,
And they will put concealer on you,
As if it would make up for the fact,
That the color has long drained from your face.
People you thought who hated you,
Will be at your funeral sobbing,
Do not wait until you are dead,
To realize you are loved.
You were looking for a sign, weren't you?
This is it.
Do not let this disease devour you,
Do not let the cackles control you,
Do not let your worst nights keep you,
From seeing the best day of your life.
Do not let the bullies beat you down.
On days your doubt your strength,
Remember how many days,
You were forced to hold your own head up,
And how far you made it.
Every day you wake up,
Is a nightmare defeated,
Continue to defeat.
You are not merely an expense,
You are not worthless,
You are beautiful,
And your life matters.

Wilderness House Literary Review 11/1

Love

A phobia is an irrational fear,
It is not an excuse,
To discriminate towards those,
Who differentiate from your preferences.
We deserve wedding cakes,
Just as much as anyone else,
Because you cannot help how you look,
Or who you love.
To feel like you do not belong,
In your own body,
To be ostracized from a society,
That preaches to 'be yourself'.
Censoring behaviors,
Terrified of being called out,
For being too masculine or feminine.
We are not sinners,
For falling subject to love,
He said to love thy neighbor,
And you may throw the first stone,
If you have never sinned yourself,
And we are all products of sin,
And didn't Jesus have two fathers?
They fear us because we are different,
We fear them because they are all the same.
Love is not criminal,
Love is patient, love is kind,
Love is not meant to be confined.
Some of us cannot help,
If their parents chose their gender for them,
Or if we do not want to have sex at all,
We are not bad parents because we will not force,
Our children into a lifestyle they do not want.
They think we are the problem,

Wilderness House Literary Review 11/1

Because we defy procreation,
But the procreators are the ones,
Who keep giving birth to us.
We are not confused,
We are not degenerates,
We are stronger than the cruel,
For tolerating ridicule.
We are colorful,
We are divine,
Love will not make us lose our minds.