

Wilderness House Literary Review 11/3

Lee Varon

BLISTER

for my Grandmother

I

After Grandfather's death,
she put lilacs
in a milk glass bowl

painted her nails
pearl essence:
suitors began to call.

I don't think she was interested,
but enjoyed the attention.
In her parlor

I sat on my hands,
remembered my manners.

Take off your glasses

C.W., rumored Klansman,
had blisters on his hands,
behind his back we called him *Blister*.

Would you like a praline?

At night
lilacs climb the stairs.
Dogs strain at their chains,
barking.

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II

Grandmother—
lightning in cotton gray clouds.

III

I wore my plaid dress,
kissed her rosewater cheek.
Out back, offered horses
sugar cubes
from lace doilies,
bit into a pear.

Blister laughed as

firebombs burst on TV.
In summer rain — the spray of bullets.
Clouds clog the wedge of his mouth
and a bouquet of death
comes calling.

IV

Blood floods into dreams—
a torrent of silence.

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V

I'd just learned about sex
when *Blister* comes calling.
I don't think they had it.
Something else
knit them together —

a hope chest of fear,
mothballs to keep it new.

VI

Every summer
I entered the cage
of her love,
dreaming a circle of fire.

A field of stars
encircled us
as I rested my head
on her breast.

I wanted her to love me forever
but what would I do
for her love?
Skate out
over the black ice.