

Wilderness House Literary Review 15/1

Cleo Griffith
My Cheerful Place

Grocery aisles
with their well-stocked shelves
cheer me, I nearly talk to
the brightness of labels,
walk by with slow pace,
recognize the familiar,
stop to inspect the new,
inhale the scents of apples,
bananas, green fragrance
of lettuce, peppers.

The layout is comfortable,
the locations of products
mapped on my brain,
my body follows,
takes advantage of its senses,
enjoys the cheeps of little birds
that live in the rafters,
chatter of other shoppers,
squeaky wheel of that one cart
that hasn't yet been repaired,
sensation of smooth boxes,
paper wrap on cans,
ridges on drink bottles,
the give of meat under plastic wrap
when I pick it up,
cold slippery-ness
of yogurt containers,
then the feeling of completion
as I approach the checkout,
the deja-vu of placing everything
on the black conveyer belt,
removing everything from the other end,
packing my re-useable bags.

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I wheel the cart out into the weather
hot or cold,
back to reality,
load the trunk of the car,
cheered and inundated by memories
of bright, soft, firm, fragrant,
not sure if I am more in touch
or out of touch
with what is called ordinary.

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The Heaviness of the New

The newness is not shiny,
nor green with young growth,
it is an echo of a silver shadow,
a space ever at my side,
warmth and light remembered,
intangible.

This is the newness of my year,
my eternity yet on earth,
width of a body always next to me,
familiar voice diminished,
heaviness of absence,
loss, solid.

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The Last Diamond

It had been years since
you bought me candy.
No more surprise flowers.
Unable to drive,
for you to shop alone
was not an option.
The diamond you insisted
on my picking out,
Fiftieth Year anniversary gift,
the last you gave me.

Now, nine years later,
comes the first Valentine's Day
since the night you exhaled one last time,
and while I no longer expected even a card,
I expected you, against the odds.

This time will be different.
I do expect a gift from you,
a reminder I am not alone,
sense of full lifetimes lifting up
from this strangeness of empty.

Will it be blossom,
birdsong, rainbow?
I will recognize it
when you give it,
more precious than diamonds,
most meaningful because
it is from you
and even heaven
has not pleased you enough
to forget me.