

Wilderness House Literary Review 15/2

Marty Eberhardt

Way Station

Deming, N.M.

They wait on cots
And stare at the floor.
We walk towards them in the lime-green vests
Of volunteers.
la policía, migra?
They glance and look down.
A toddler jumps off the cot
And takes a step toward me.
"Buenos dias," I say.
The mother grabs her child's arm.
Her eyes dart to mine for an instant.
And return
To the linoleum floor, smelling of morning bleach.
I bend to cot level.
"Where are you going?"
"Los Angeles,"
Whispered to the tiles.
How strange to be
An object of fear.
"We are here to help you get to your sponsors," I say.
"You will have showers, clean clothes, and
Bus tickets."
"Showers?" she says,
Fingers in her daughter's hair.
Tightly braided, maybe weeks
Since it was clean.
A thin man on the next cot
Has been watching.
He takes something out of his pocket.
Folded, torn and sunbleached,
The blue lines
Are nearly gone.

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It's an address in New Jersey.

"Es lejos," I say.

"Es lejos?" he asks, surprised.

"Yes, it's far," I say, "A few days by bus."

His face falls.

"I must go to hand out clean clothes."

"Adios," he says.

The little girl and her mother

Are silent.

Can it be

That some of my countrymen

Seek the fear

That seeps along the linoleum,

Steered by all those eyes?

And can I,

And so many others

Help to lift their gaze

For more than one scant moment?

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Friendship Park

San Diego/Tijuana border

Then, on the border
Just yards from the sea
We passed burritos through holes in the fence.
A couple shared a kiss.

The fence is higher now
And there are no gaps.
Armed guards escort us
From 10-2 only
On Saturdays and Sundays.
Proof of Citizenship may be required,
And the grills are too fine
To admit even a rolled love note
Or a dollar bill,
Which is illegal
Anyway.
But the name of the park
Has not changed.

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Early Morning in a Thirty-Year Marriage

Underneath the pile of quilts,
Your eyes will open,
Shockingly blue
In the dim light of the shuttered room.
I'll bring you coffee.
Your freckled hands
Will cradle the cup
As gently as you touch my face.

You'll be home tonight,
To lay a fire.
You'll ask if my knee hurts,
how my writing's going.

We'll slide into another day,
Surging through the rocks
Like fish
To the small deep pools
Where we swim
Together.