

Wilderness House Literary Review 16/3

Grazia Rutherford-Swan
excavation

i hope when they cut open my body to donate my bones
they find that inside i look like the above-ground subway station at 4th
avenue in gowanus.
high rafters, sunset projecting orange and pink onto passing metal trains,
the conductor watching me walk to the end of the tracks so i can see light
reflecting from the railing
where i hope no one has ever jumped. i hope the doctor or taxidermist or
funeral home worker or whoever
it is that takes pleasure in tearing open
a body will find mine to be as it was that evening, and will feel briefly as i
did
for those few minutes on the track: late to meet an old friend, heartbroken
but less so now, beautiful, clothed
in the most forgiving light the sun can put out, seeing the self as a speck of
grime
under an oncoming train,
being okay knowing that the passengers on board will never know me.

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something good

in the spring my nose gets freckles again. i'm wondering if you remember
that, but i'll romanticize it either
way in case you don't. someone
has to do those things: take pictures of all the new daffodils before
they seem usual, mark the feeling of my thighs chafing under my skirt
when they kiss at every step.
i think often
of one of your specific vertebrae that sticks out just below the scar on your
neck. i loved how wrong
it felt under my fingers, like the hardness of a bruise, stained from
running into you. the new season never lasts long enough, and how we
were was cut short,
too. first buds there and blooming and then nothing at all until i couldn't
stand it anymore, sweat
dripping into my underwear like a leaking sink. today at the park
i was listening to a song that reminded me of you and observing all these
toddlers bumping
into each other in the grass —
greeting each other in tongues, dragging sticks through dirt, letting ants
crawl on their hands. they were learning how to be people.
it made me so happy i cried,
just knowing how rare it is to feel something good.

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frog&toad

i wish you were there that august when i was ten and catching toads
in my hands as they leapt from the tall grass next to the lake. all my
friends complained about their mosquito bites and i stayed out until it
was dark
and the fire was warm,
wondering if my hands would get warts on them, if all those childhood
myths are true: a toad gives you warts —
a watermelon seed swallowed will grow in your stomach until it pops —
the love of your life will love you easily and forever — fifth grade is the
most
stress you'll endure — your parents will never die — the boy next door
will not kill
the frog in his yard with a bb gun —
you will not watch it die slowly from its wounds — you will not bring it
into the pool,
hoping the water will bring it back to life — you will not bury it under the
trampoline — you will not still be thinking about it
fifteen years later.
i think you'd have wanted to stay out in the fields even longer than me,
bending down with a flashlight, shining it through grass, hoping
to see something jump up. and you wouldn't touch it, you just wanted to
see it,
to know there was something else alive there next to you.