

Wilderness House Literary Review 16/4

Gene Twaronite

Sonnet: Shallow Well

I lived in the woods where I learned to get by
with a shallow dug well and three feet of water.

Each summer I peered down and watched
as the level of water slowly receded.

At times it hit bottom and I would curtail my use
until the precious flow came back as it always did.

In those surface days, it was enough to survive
and there was no need to go deep.

I wonder if the well is still there.
Would I look down now and see

dry crusted pebbles and something long dead?
It's hard to get by on three feet of water.

The waters grow harder to reach as my soul
draws down to find what it needs.

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Stonework

I pause on the trail, gazing down at torso-sized boulders
fitted precisely into the steep slope like a staircase
made by some forgotten elven race.

With pry bars, mattocks, and sledgehammers,
grit and skillful brute force,
they took these unyielding rocks
and shaped them into a sure path
to follow through these untamed lands,
deflecting the storms and protecting the native soil
while allowing this lonely traveler
to pass this way safely.

The stonework is never done.
I have taken the wild blocks of an unruly life,
prying and coaxing them into position,
smashing them into manageable bits
when the stones didn't fit the narrative
of the path I now follow.

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Arms at Ninety-Five

What if we grew like the saguaro
and waited until fifty to grow an arm,
or not even grow one,
a lonely spear standing tall
against the sky?

Or we could wait until ninety-five,
sprouting little baby stumps
still learning to reach out
and take hold of something
worth holding.