

Wilderness House Literary Review 17/2

Cori Howard

In Between

you wake on a bridge in the dark
your child on one side
your lover on the other
a bitter wind blowing

alone with a long view to the horizon
you hear your own holy voice
she has been quiet, considering
the step forward

the one you don't want to take

let go of the love that made you feel
like warm ocean water dripping off your skin
a love that woke you up
to yourself again

it's tempting to stay right here
in between
playing Jesus
nailed to the cross of sacrifice and longing

wake up
you are not the giving tree
not Jesus
not even in love anymore

the way home
is a deep dive
close your eyes
breathe deep

jump

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Threshold

here we are
you and me
on the edge of uncertainty
entwined together
in the safe harbor of my bed
with our candles and crystals and goddess cards
we look for meaning
and visions
you and I
and all the while
we are being pulled
like the tide
by the waning moon
that slips now
in and out of pale winter clouds
illuminating the room
like a lighthouse

the blood that runs in you
is water flowing in me
the truth is
we are the same river

what I will lose
when you veer off
to become your own
tributary:
watching your face asleep
the late night conversations about boys,
our bodies
and what's for dinner

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each grain in the hourglass
cuts a deeper wound
while I lie here
your head on my lap
your arm casually
flung across my leg
my fingers twirling the ribbons of your hair
just another weeknight

I close my eyes
memorize
I know
it's almost over

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The Road

this winding road
weaves its way through decades
this tunnel of green
so dense you can't see the sky
even in winter

each curve unfurls a memory
me in my red plaid coat
giggling in the backseat with my brother
my mother's arm reaching back
as we dodge her pincers

these trees are a thousand years old
but here I am a teenager
speeding around dawn's tight corner
spilling with drug addled laughter
thinking I am getting away with something

thinking I am free
not looking up
not even noticing
the sprinkling of stardust
falling through thick cedar boughs

as a mother I slow down
show my taciturn teenagers
the quiet awe this road deserves
their eyes like stones rolling in the creek
indifferent

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now I drive this road alone
windows down no matter the season
alert to the dripping ancients
their emerald coats, their whispering leaves
at last I am listening