

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/1

Beate Sigriddaughter
Fly Anyway

The mandate is to be well-informed but to refrain from anger. It isn't easy when her world is spinning with unwillingness and evil rides safely on the shoulders of politeness. She hasn't asked for permission for a very long time and feels like a stranger in a world that was meant to be her home. Many blueberries ago...but that was then. A tiny gesture can extinguish all desire, and she feels like all the petals have fallen off her passion, perhaps as she was sleeping. Her garden has turned wild again, abandoned. Not what she wanted, and beautiful all the same. When he hands her the bouquet of rumors he has gathered, does he want her to explain? Or to defend herself? Or to simply go away? She doesn't expect to sleep tonight. The urge to argue with fairy tales is strongest just before dawn. She loves watching morning become itself. When the moon is full again, she will be gone. It's easier to make mistakes among strangers. In token of farewell, he says he doesn't understand her wings. But fly. Fly anyway.

She Tries to Not Be Afraid

Though she wonders what it would be like to live like the sun, immense and useful, unafraid, requiring no attention or applause. She walks uphill, filled with a prickle of intensity, trying to remember the call of red winged blackbirds by a summer pond. How can you not love something with red wings? She watches autumn leaves of mountain mahogany, tiny and red like summer flowers. Or does she have that wrong? Is it another plant? There are so many things she doesn't know. She would love to be sentimental but is afraid of being belittled for it. And then there is always the sin of beauty. The verdict is: women only have themselves to blame if they are desired against their will. Meanwhile, she is unable to persuade the world that war is insane. For that matter, often she isn't even able to persuade the man she loves that she is important. She thinks of her parents who would have gladly loved her, but they were already so busy with everything else. It reminds her of a study she read how mice who were neglected by their mothers later neglected their offspring. Fortunately, she is not a mouse. More like a phoenix. She watches mist curl through tree tops and wonders how long a phoenix lives after it flies out of the ashes. There was a time when she didn't believe in God. She didn't believe in Nietzsche either. She could barely understand them. And she certainly didn't believe in herself. Now she starts doubting her pernicious disbelief.

She Loses Him to Soft Indifference

Rain drums its gutter melodies. She can feel it in her bones, like a benevolent cry. Someone mended the fence where they used to slip through to watch the full moon in a pond. They also closed off the fragile bridge where she could watch the swirl of the river underneath her feet in places where stones were missing. These are things she wouldn't even notice if he hadn't lost his passion and then apparently stopped looking. He doesn't seem to miss it. She does. Once upon a time, her heart was filled with apple blossoms and surrender, with silver bellied swallows in the sun. Earlier today in the park when rain had stopped for a while, she saw an esplanade of poles covered with pink roses left from someone's wedding celebration. Everyone seems to travel in pairs. How easy it is for him to let go of her at the end of the day. She reads poems before falling asleep and wakes up many times with syllables of celebration echoing. Her obsession with his new indifference fades a little. She remembers the time they stopped, still radiant and frivolous, in a run-down tavern by the ocean after a long walk and read the sign over the bar. *If anything here is not up to your standards, please lower your standards.* She will try.