

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/2

Lela Hannah
Coming of Age

He liked me

before my tongue
split in two,

my opinions
now venom
in his ears.

Passive aggressive
blooming, he wanted
me sublime, tongue
flicking in morse code,
he preferred me up for
interpretation,

not the plain language of my
thighs, the way they thunder
with every step these days.

He wanted my knees buckled,
but doesn't he know
my lips have been brewing
a tsunami?

I don't want to be hoisted
onto his back,
I don't want to be the crown
on his head,
or the hunger pains in his stomach
that only I can fill.

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/2

I want us to sprint at the same pace,
never leaving the other behind, I
want a place at his roundtable,
no voice to thunder over mine, I
don't want him to be a metric of my worth, I
don't need him to build me a shrine, I
am no sacrificial lamb, I
am the goat who eats from her own hand.

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/2

Anxiety jumps rope

with my synapses,
plucking strings
and strumming me
into an E minor tragedy
when all I want
is to hear a symphony

of myself in all the mAjor notEs.

I've spent too much time
flat lining, the beat of my heart
too shallow to be my metronome.

When my anxiety
goes on intermission,

my brain sings off-key,
paranoia screeching
from the stage,
echoing half-truths
through the foyer.

My audience, first-time patrons,
demand a refund from the box office.

The salesperson directs them
to the gift shop to buy my merchandise –
discounted insomnia
and blood-freezing fear
of everything from elevators
to evil spirits hiding in the air ducts.

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/2

The lights dim for the second act,
my brain takes her place,
sings wrist-bleeding ballads
to an abandoned auditorium.

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/2

Photosensitive

Lightning
is aliens taking pictures
of earth with large cameras.

They zoom in on me,
wonder how a single body
can be the loneliest flood
of Amazonian proportions.

Head tilted to inky sky,
willing my tears
back into their ducts,
I have practice
smiling dry-faced
and pretty

I hope they remember to turn off the flash next time.