

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/3

Erin Smola

Museum of Mornings-After

A crumpled can of Twisted Tea

—raspberry flavor—

yellow on the forest floor, serves as an artifact:

an ode to youth in eastern Pennsylvania,

precious relic of parties past.

Last night, bursts of laughter broke

the silence like twigs, in that state of mind-numbed

beauty Joyce and Parker sought after

—succumbed to—

how do they know which words to let roll

off the tongue, and which to swallow back

like whiskey, bile, other bitter things?

I don't know how to talk and laugh

so, I quench my thirst with empty bottles,

a curator of mornings-after.

Rabbit-Heart

I've always had a Rabbit's heart
trembling in my chest.
The slightest hint of danger
sends it hopping into motion—
a Songbird, maddened by the bars
of her cage, raging against my breast.
I wish I could unhinge my ribs,
free her pent-up longing,
but the Rabbit's heart burrows
at the slightest thought of pain.

The scent of sadness, like the rain,
weighs heavy on this little heart.
Fallen leaves and roadkill bones
litter forest's edge, where the fawnless
Doe must make her bed—
awake with tumbling questions
of the universal purpose,
whether wolf will traipse the path
to finish her off once more.

I found a Rabbit by the fence:
maybe asleep, so still it lies!
Skeleton swathed in tawny fur,
unblinking marble eyes.
No blood nor fleshly wound—
that trembling muscle simply stopped.

A Rabbit-Hearted girl with a dirty shovel
bends down to clean it up.

Autumn

Then Autumn takes
like the common thief in a crowd;
then Autumn snaps
the neck of the green leaf,
trailing bright crimson in her wake.

Then Autumn wakes
me from silent wondering
to tend my gutters,
cluttered with the dead.
A rake grates against the brick:
scraping its lament into
the tarpaulin's hungry mouth.

Then Autumn consummates
marriage, joining Winter with a kiss
of frost: taking her as she is,
promising to bury her crimes
beneath a soft, white blanket
fit for their marriage bed.