

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/1

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Rabbit Shelter in Autumn

Why this breakneck beating here, these headlong moth wings
fluttering under skin, quieter than breath clouding
a window? When I sit
at the pond's edge twirling spotted leaves,
and stand sudden (birds caw into mist),
my heartbeats mimic the whir of wings.

Not a sound, but vibration:
as when I lie, my ear on the cleft earth listening
to her hum, rabbits bounding, wind droning
against brittle sage—woah-woah, sounds so soft
it's easy to miss their muffled pulses.

I scoop the black one from her pen (french lop),
her itty countdown drumming while she
tucks her head, grips my wrist. Her long foot slips,
hind narrowing: who will stop her fall, prey animal,
who can slow the agitated heart,

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Our planet angles her curve toward shadow

outside branches snag the sill
birds peck seed
then flash into wind
silence overhangs houses and schools
as the last light trickles below the tree-line

we set our clocks forward as if
more time
were enough

candles burn longer into night
mildew blackens
window panes where beetles curl
and die with twilight

leaves drift apart
like sisters
their once-warm colors melting
into sidewalks and imprinting there like
ghosts

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Walking Alone

I watch chickadees scratching at the cedars.
Walking barefoot through weeds,
or over sun-cracked earth, I crave sleep.
Under cottonwoods I hear creaking
like the slow opening of a door at night.

To hamper sneaking, my father once pulled
my door from its hinges. So often he'd lay
with his bald head furrowing my quilt,
he weight of him holding me until still.

Mallards splash into flight
when I walk near their water, bleating
like gleeful girls. Sinking my naked toes
into moss, chilled sponge, I walk through thistles
and nettles. I let them raze my raw skin.

If caught laughing at night, I slept
on grainy concrete beside our hatch-back,
spine rigid, my ears probing
for the door's soft moan, my father's mild tread.

Some days now, my terrier will seize and fall
from the couch, his legs stiff and shaking,
those sepia eyes bulging with alarm. I will hold him
until still. Still, I hear doors creaking in the trees
and in the night, and still, I miss my father.