

Wilderness House Literary Review 2/1

Autumn

She has canned the last tomatoes from the garden
hailed the boat up
stored the grill in the garage
and turned the pictures face down on the piano
to protect them from dust
that will fall like snow
all winter in the still house.

Mother, Father in the gold frames
daughters, grandchildren, all down.
She has closed the lid over the piano keys
and pushed in the bench.
The sounds are almost behind her now
chopsticks, card shuffling,
and the sigh of spilled salt.

She heads to the back door.
Eleanor said they'd fetch her soon.

There is the bear to take into account.
He stands huge in the hall
filling the space with his rough, matted fur.
He breathes like a door shutting.
She thinks *This is what it's like
to be an old woman
alone in an old house.*

Let's get back to business.
She walks from room to room
Checking one last time
thinks *I better not slip and fall like Etta.*
*I'd rather lumber along the earth
like a grouchy train.*
The bear watches from each door way.

Eleanor's car pulls up and Eleanor calls "Yoohoo," and honks.

Then out the back door, put the extra key under the rock.
She must believe she will surprise the house again
after the white, shadowless stretch of winter.
"Oh, it's you!" the house will exclaim.

She must believe winds will tease straggles from her bun.
Mice will nest in the garage
Armies of birds will fly home.
But what will she do with the yellow eyes of the bear?

Three more days

John's a rodeo rider

When John
had a heart attack
they put him on life support
John's son asked, "Is there anything you want to say?"
"We've said everything," John said
"Pull the damn plug
"I'm gonna get me three more days."

It was a bumpy ride.
He was hanging on the whole time,
The ride of a lifetime.

John's a rodeo rider

"This animal has met its match," John said.
"I always was an impatient son of a bitch.
I wanted everything done yesterday
but when it comes to dying
I'm diggin' in my heels.
I want three days.

John's a rodeo rider