

Wilderness House Literary Review 20/3

Claire Scott

MY PARENTS

not love

or not the right kind of love

black scars of smoke

blowing out each other's candles

leaving burnt wicks

of bitterness

he: frightened of her starless world

her bleak stories scrawled at midnight

she: bored by his repetitive routine

the tick of his tedious watch

yet clinging to each other

to avoid drowning

not realizing they already were

there must be another version

there must be

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I WORRY

I won't be good at it
confusing rows of pills in orange vials
two pink ones at noon instead of at night
forgetting the antiseptic wipe
and sterile gloves when I flush his port
I worry I will be resentful
anger unfurling like a wind-whipped flag
overcooking his eggs
forgetting to order Depends
I worry my life will be swallowed
by his needs
no time to walk, to write
to have tea with friends
I worry I will be lonely

I watch others in the clinic
one helping her husband
find his phone, his hands shaking
another loudly repeats
that that this Dr. Stanley's office
you remember Dr. Stanley
as she pushes the wheelchair
to the men's room
I notice the wet on his pants
another woman softly says
time to put our coat on
as she gentles him awake
I worry I am afraid
of death's warm breath

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what happened
whatever happened
to the happy life they shared
now a distant memory
how can they do it

after sixty years
soft with sadness
waves part, the past flows
how can I not

SLIPPERY SLOPE

Just north of eighty
tau and amyloid proteins
sprinkled like confetti through my brain
according to the fuzzy PET scan
that looks like the painting of a five-year-old
lots of lovely green, yellow and red
which apparently isn't so great
although they look prettier
than the few black and blue spots
that signal health

Soon I will live hourless hours
no longer subject to the tyranny of time
no dipping into the past, imagining the future
plaques and tangles will do-si-do
like a simple square dance
but I will sit on the sidelines
a middle school wallflower
in a brand-new satin dress
no longer knowing how to
Allemande left and promenade