

Wilderness House Literary Review 4/3

Kara Breithaupt
are you listening?

are you listening to me, because you don't seem to be listening, you don't seem to care, care about what you did or who you did it to or who it affects, everyone it affects, everyone, are you listening to me, because you don't seem to grasp what you did is wrong, what you did is immoral, people are hurt, and are you listening, because you can't imagine mom when she called you after checking the joint account for the first time since marriage, conveying someone must have stolen the card number, a three hundred dollar charge at a hotel friday night when you were in san francisco and she home, and you, voice syrup, it's okay, you, calm, it must be a mistake, you, serene, would contact the bank and call the hotel, you, harmonious, would take care of it, are you listening to me, because she went to that hotel, she went to that hotel and told the front desk attendant there was a mistake, her husband was in san francisco last friday for a seminar, she was at home making dinner for the youngest, only child still at home, and there must be a mistake, because your joint account had a three hundred dollar charge on it from this hotel, and someone must have stolen the credit card, are you listening to me, because visualize mom standing, waiting for the signature, and then it's your signature, her husband of twenty-nine years, together for thirty, she thought together forever, it's your signature, in a hotel thirty minutes from your lives, thirty-five miles from the house you built and the family you share, thirty minutes from reality, and you with some woman you still won't name, protecting some woman you are, some slut mom says, because the definition of slut is sexually promiscuous woman, sexual acts, sexual intercourse, sex, are you listening to me, because picture mom seeing your signature and sinking, descending into desolation devastation deterioration, imagine her, a whisper, needing a copy of your signature, a request, and the employee escaping to the back room to copy a signature, your signature, and mom crumbling on the hotel lobby's couch, then hearing someone enter, her head in hands, vitality vanished, eyes closed, black, hearing someone enter, inarticulate imploration for that person to ignore her, and still feeling the presence, no pronunciation, sensing a presence, and opening her eyes and lifting her head, and it's you, you, coming to eclipse the evidence, you, her husband of twenty-nine years, my dad of twenty-three years, father to your son for twenty-one years, to your youngest for nineteen years, the vacation planner, family chief, instigator of our lives, the man, the father, the husband, the poet, the lawyer, the sensitive family man, and it's you, the man she trusted with her money, her savings, her family, her life, her love, her trust, and are you listening to me, because she told you she knew, hiccupping pain, bleeding tears, she told you she knew, and you just stood, just stood as teardrops slashed her eyes, just stood as she said she knew you were with another woman last friday, just stood as she swiped at you with her purse, because she wanted to cause physical pain, you just stood as she detonated how could you, how could you do this to me, to our family, how could you liquidate our lives, how could you do this, and you just stood, stationary, as she, passionate, emotional, encountered you, and you just stood, detached, no apologies, face impassive, marble, as you said you guessed you could end it with her, and you just stood, as mom, annihilated, struggled to her car

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to drive away, and are you listening to me, because mom called and i was fluid, and i called my brother and my sister and you never called, and i called and you, you just fucked up, and i wouldn't understand because i'd never been married, and you just fucked up, and i, are you listening to me, because nothing will ever be the same, and i don't want you to come to my games anymore, i don't want you to visit, take me out to lunch, dinner, i will never go on another vacation with you, i don't want to see you, words wavering, was it worth it dad, was the one night worth it, and you, marble, it wasn't just one night, it was more of a fling, a one-month two-month thing, and i hung up and drove to my childhood home, to mom, and we clasped, locked love, and are you listening to me, because you never called, and the next day i called you again, and my first sentence, i know you've been doing this ten fifteen twenty years, you, pause, how do you know, i, i just know, i just know dad, and you, you'll never prove it, you'll never prove it, and i dissipated, and are you listening to me, because that night i drove to my childhood home and i, wrath weeping, creased your clothes into bags, and i, wrath weeping, wrote, to my loving father across a bag's front, and i, wrath, weeping, drove, departing them on your office's doorstep, because you told your youngest you'd sleep there, and i returned to my childhood home, and you had emailed mom that day, you were coming home, it was legally your house, you were going to stay, and she, no, and you, yes, and her brother called you, told you not to come home, you asked her brother, what does it matter to you, why do you care, and are you listening to me, because the next day at work i received an email from you, the prank wasn't funny, and you could just picture me and mom, mirth, putting your clothes in bags, and laughing, driving them to your office, and you wrote i wasn't involved in this, because i was no longer financially dependant on you, and i wasn't involved, because i had a job and no longer lived in the family home, and you called me fucking clueless, fucking, you said, fucking clueless, because i didn't know what was going on, and i, wrath weeping, wrote back, calling you the fucking clueless one, again, do you know what you've done, do you know what you've caused, do you understand nothing will ever be the same, and i don't want you to come to my games anymore, i don't want you to visit, take me out to lunch, dinner, i will never go on vacation with you, i don't want to see you, you'll be lucky if you walk me down the aisle when i get married, whenever that is, you do not understand the sanctity of marriage, family, and are you listening to me, because you never responded, you never called, you never wrote back, and circumstances developed, and my high school coach's brother called mom, said remember the divorce six years ago, remember the family destroyed, that was your husband, that was your husband and my wife, realized with a love letter discovery, poem, to his wife, from you, the same adoration, affection, amour you write of for mom, he realized the truth, and he confronted you, and you, marble, didn't think it was a big deal, and why wasn't he over it, and the stories of other women materialized, and how many women have you slept with since you've been married, and are you listening to me, how many women have you had, how much shit have you talked about mom, your loving, adoring, worshiping wife, always patient, always encouraging, always supportive, and how many lies have you told, are you listening to me, because you don't know reality anymore, your mom, friends, cried for you, called me, crying, for you, pleading me to talk to you, and

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are you listening to me, because factors flourished, and mom's brother told his story, and are you listening, because i know, i know, mom on the couch, your youngest suckling, three months old, her brother revealed you had accosted his wife, your sister-in-law, mom breast-feeding on the couch, your youngest of three, you had accosted his wife, your sister-in-law alleged rape, twenty years ago, and mom had questioned, and you, marble, didn't think it was a big deal, and what was the problem, and are you listening to me, because that was twenty years ago, with three children under the age of three, and mom breast-feeding, and she, denial, let it go, and are you listening to me, because i am not letting this go, because mom filed for divorce, and you wanted to move back in, and you, manipulative, don't know what more you can possibly do, but you won't even tell the truth, we don't know how many women, we don't know how many families destroyed, we don't know who, we don't know you, and are you listening to me, because circumstances continue, and i learn of how you hit my sister, i barely touched her, you always said, she's weak, i barely touched her, and her crying, locked in her room, and i accepted, i don't know why, and i didn't question, i don't know why, and i learn of you calling my brother a faggot and a pussy, and i accepted, i didn't question, i don't know why, and i learn of the hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars you have hidden from us, from your family, and mom back to work, working for us, for her family, and you, never bringing home bonuses or raises, you, a lawyer, in-house counsel, telling us you never got a raise in ten years, you never received a bonus, and we believed, because we trusted, and are you listening to me, because where did that money go, and how much of mom's money have you spent on your sluts, and how much have you lied, and are you listening to me, because you never call, and you never write, and you're fucking clueless, you had said, you wouldn't understand, you've never been married, prove it, and i never touched her, and are you listening to me, dad