

Wilderness House Literary Review 4/3

Lori Powell

By Heart

I've learned the progress of summer
by heart; first the green
tendrils curling smoke-like
from the thaw of dead leaves,
the tender bones of vole
and bird; the stew of winter.

Then the stark woods
drape themselves at furious
vegetable speed. It is a shouting,
a freedom; a high note
held until the lungs collapse.

For a time only the small
hearts of fruit matter.
I hear them throbbing gold,
crimson, purple, and my blood
leaps along its intricate necklace.

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The Vine

Yours is a tall mind
moving among the upper branches,
muscles singing their long, clear notes.

Who could blame me
for riding the bony shanks of trees
upwards towards the sunlight,
though it's past my growing season.

Here the woods vibrate with quick things,
nervous mice,
birds with staccato calls
and sudden decisions.
But I leaf to a winding rhythm
and will never catch you.

Long after you've flown
I'll be coiling
towards the rustling overhead

forgetting every smoothed
and straightened desire.

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Insects

On nights my room is not big enough
I open a window to this other,
where the hail of fierce sounds
is the night coming unstrung,
bead by bead.

Somewhere in the thicket of trees
are the slender thumbs of their bodies,
the brittle legs sawing,
but their song has broken free
and runs in all directions,
an engine with no god.

Listening, I clamor with voices.
In this room the night owns,
I am a story told small,
I am a jaw clicking and clicking
in a thicket of gods.