

Wilderness House Literary Review 4/4

Kyle Hemmings
Hunting Season

You drop hand-formed rabbit pellets, oval-shaped, dark,
along rub lines and bedding areas. You do what papa says.

Lying down in soft grass, you wait for a lone buck to bed.
The sky undresses itself, dons a nightgown of swirl, from

the bottom up. Slow sundown. A sharing. Consider papa's
Interdiction: make your mark as a man or you are doe

waiting to be hunted. Squatting, you make out the burly
figure of your brother, cradling a .28 gauge in his lumberjack

arms. Then disappears past a thick of red and white oak
without mast. He will search for early scrapes from a mature

buck, scrapes under a sweep of branches. Playing papa's game.
If he naps, papa will thrash and make him whimper. Such a

strange pleasure papa derives from making men feel small
as acorns. Your slow witted brother who is still a city virgin.

You snuggle against your .20 gauge and swing your head,
watching papa saunter in a northwesterly direction. Listening

to his grunts and rattles upwind, watching him hold his human
decoy--a head of medium sized antlers that will make a buck

aggressive without fear of smack down. Papa loves to fake
them out and soon he is gone too. That harbinger of all

fake-out and doom to cruising bucks and coteries of sweet doe.
You have this vision: a lone deer will remember your papa almost

crawling through, but eventually succumbing to the smoke.
The cabin on fire, his greasy heart and his careless matchsticks.

That same deer, the one papa could not kill, limps in your
backyard of chewed apples and leafless stem, night after night.

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Before Everything You were an Anonymous Stain

At an early age
I acquired my father's taste
for drowning women,
an ear
for epithets soaked in uterine wine,
the rosy finger
as in The Rosy Fingered Woman,
my father
such a wanted man
who spoke from
various disguises
those funny rabbit ears
that made women vulnerable.

>From three rooms up
over the stretch of highway
in the shape of the letter C
as in Caesarian,
over the Texaco Star's
neon blinking lights
in the shape of a tilted
cocktail glass,

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I could hear the cries,
sense the inconsolate dust
moving, shifting
under un-repairable
but nautically correct
bodies
and the truth of the matter
was that
I wasn't even born
just the stillness
or the dis-tilling
the dark
my odd formations
in
the embryo of a hare.

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The Solomon Code

This morning
you wake up to find
that you cannot move your legs.
You recall last night's dream
where you were young
impulsive as last night's rain.
You stared at your twitching hands
after killing your mother's
shady-eye lover
his promises that dropped
like so many acorns
into her open hands.

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Later, you held her
in the center of the old kitchen,
the floor, cold linoleum to bare feet
your thoughts turning pure and navy-blue:
Surely, a twister
will come this way
and Kansas will be cleansed of drifters
no longer bordered
on four sides
by whistling prairies.

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Now staring at your lined hands
dumbly
you wonder what secrets
your husband has been keeping from you
and were your legs really
the first to go numb?
Next to you, he sleeps
still as a stone.
And in another room
your child's favorite coloring book:
God's Little Garden,
where all the little animals
speak
to each other.