

Wilderness House Literary Review 5/3

Kirk Etherton

The Island

What day was it when we first referred to
The Island?

Sometime during those first few months, when our
amazement was most acute:
the circumstance of having found each other
in those anonymous urban swells.

It was an ordinary room, filtering
the low rumble, crest and roll of
passing cars. But we learned quickly that
blissful trick, a sleight of hand and
body and mind, to make our own world

and make the other disappear.
Simultaneously lost and found on
a languid shore of cotton sheets we
were the landscape of

only us, curled below the sun's
last lapping shadows;
the calm after the storm.

Wilderness House Literary Review 5/3

Northern Vermont, Northern Lights

No dreaming could measure up
to this show unfolding across
the dome of the sky, luminous

curtains of shimmering light
billowing down from the infinite
changing shapes and colors

slowly somehow becoming

two concentrated electric pools
on opposite poles of a clearest
cloudless night as we watch

they gradually reach
across and connect—half a
dozen pulsing, glowing strands
flash like thousand-mile long

suspension bridge cables strung
from horizon to horizon: the heavens

as a self-made stringed instrument
playing itself silently above
us, the seeming audience of
only two

still on the earth.
There we sit
transported and transfixed,
with the nearest town
or street light

far, far, another world away.

Desire

The thought of you:
I turn it over slowly like
a beach stone in my hand,
tracing all the curves and
hollows sculpted smooth
beneath the steady stroke
of storm and sand.

The Fish Appears

There is a fish, light brown,
two-and-a-half feet long, suspended
motionless on my bedroom ceiling.
It grew gradually over a period
of months: the small roof-leak
that spawned it is long gone, but
the fish remains, unchanging.

Like other animals I've read about,
this one can survive a long time
without water. He (I think of him
as male) is particularly well-suited
for the holidays, as above his

flaked-paint speck of an eye rise
impressively spreading reindeer antlers.
Plus, he sports a prominent,
bulbous nose which you can
easily imagine suddenly becoming
bright red, illuminating a cold
evening to help guide an airborne
sleigh stuffed to the gills with toys.

Besides the eye-spot, the white
ceiling paint has fallen off in only
one other place: mid-body, below
the dorsal fin—imagine you have X-ray vision
of this fish to see any foreign objects, and clearly
visible is a good-sized, barbed hook.

(There's no line attached, though, so
this must be one durable fish: it may have
"taken the bait" at some point, but refused
to be removed from its element. Yes,
he's a wily survivor of the plaster depths.)

Best of all, he appears to have a sense
of humor. Look carefully, and you'll see
a thin line running down from his antlers
to below his whiskered chin: yes, it seems
he has tied the antlers on!

You hear stories about thousands of people
traveling hundreds of miles just to glimpse
the image of some saint or savior which is
cast on the side of a mobile home by a
street light reflecting off the bumper

...

Wilderness House Literary Review 5/3

of an abandoned 1972 Dodge pickup truck.
Well, I live in a quiet neighborhood with
limited parking, and I'm not certain

about the homeowner's liability implications,
so—even if I could get \$10 per visitor—
I'm not about to call any media outlets
and let them know about
The Miracle of the Fish.