

Wilderness House Literary Review 6/1

Carolyn Gregory
Broken Bed

One day, it groaned and split,
its frame derailed by a shift of weight.

Its end had been coming for two years
following a night of fun,
its footboard falling off,
a screw or two flying into dust.

Even good wood has a life span
and this frame was hammered
and bent
over seasons of sleep,
its whole left side tumbling
under extra pressure.

It had shared too many dreams
with its owner,
too much insomnia,
times sprawling with novels
or cheek to cheek with a lover
on a cold night.

The end was predicted
with groans and sinking,
the mattress teetering toward the floor.
It met its maker one January night.

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What's Guaranteed

This shining stick is my best friend.
Reliable and ready,
all it wants is a good polish
and targets,
needs less than humans do.

It doesn't need no movie
for inspiration,
waits patiently in a corner
to be taken to the field.

Been doing this since I was
a kid with my old man
and he taught me
how to hunt the enemy.

It's right important
to know who the enemy is,
not point the thing at women
or dogs out strolling,

not play with it
after too much partying
Saturday nights.

Sometimes I can hit a snake
and sometimes an enemy
if I've got my sight
focused straight ahead.

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Wedding Dream

There were one thousand people
at the wedding
and I did not know any.
Waving, they mistook me for the bride
because I wore ribboned ivory
and could see none
since I forgot my glasses.

The minister was Methodist
though the bride and groom, non-believers.
The aisle to the altar was a mile long
with a paisley runner.
Changing seats, the congregants
played cards while waiting
for the organ.

While my hair slowly dried,
there were many things to think about
in that lofty judgment place --
first communion, graduation,
even the end though pink dresses
scouted like spring flowers
and Bach flowed over the keys.

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Spring Glory

Once it struck a pose –
brazen gold against all odds,
stridently announcing the end of snow
like a horn with no mute,
flashy and uncontrolled.

Overnight, the flowers crawled
along the side of a weather-stained house,
filling in the scars with saffron clots.

No doubt the weedy blooms seemed rude
against slow gray
when buds uncurl from dormancy to color –
sudden fire.

Several springs have passed.
Time will change perspective.

Let me accept the courage of forsythia,
sleeping without recognition in the dark
until spring calls her
to dance again and bend
the fountain of fine branches.

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Spring Stage (after seeing *Spring Awakening*)

Some nights, I choose moonlight
like that hot night
when a musical presents suicide and love
in the same two hours

and I am thrown back
to the weird boundaries
of adolescence,
full of my own sap,
curious about the Facts.

Mother was not forthcoming.
So I slept with the hero in the woods
just like our heroine
on her shifting stage,
the platform moving painted tree roots,
right and left beneath manic dancing.

Somehow, I survived disease
and melancholy.
Forty years later, I can see
past the rose-colored tulips,
applaud these actors and ride home.

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Marbles and Manners

On the second floor, she hoists herself
from her divan,
smoothing the burgundy nightgown.
She's slept on this velvet a long time,
surrounded by portraits of women.
One has a pearl necklace, another pinc nez,
the third tightlipped, crucifix
above the breasts.

Downstairs, there is much commotion.
The child rolls marbles
across a hardwood floor, banging into
table legs and sofa.
She shoots paper airplanes
out an open window.
A few land on a tall hat.
She's bored with the silent piano.

The woman in her nightgown startles
with the ruckus,
the ladies in their portraits gossiping
about bad manners
so she stiffly climbs the stairs
to join the child in her domain.

She has no idea what she will find.
In the parlor, crayon flows across walls
with drawings of piranhas and parrots.
Marbles big as bowling balls tumble underfoot.

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The child jumps on a chair with downy pillows,
face plastered white with blue ringed eyes.
Her hair is on fire!

It's too much for a lady of leisure.
She climbs the stairs back
to her quiet room among the portraits
while the house burns down.