

Wilderness House Literary Review 6/4

Loukia Janavaras

Metaxa

A name like silk sounds,
metaxi, spun gold
brandy wine threads
weave an early winter, warming
no wonder
it's served after death services
smooth shots slung in mid-air
no need to count stars—
three will suffice

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Muse

What is it like
knowing
you have opened
me from the inside
tapped deep
releasing an outpour
captured
only in craft
a form you can take
away as your own
a souvenir
embodying our journey.

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Waves

You ask why
I sent you the waves—
a captured glimpse,
on my back,
yearning, their roar
turning their blues
like my dreams
of you
in a blue-Hawaiian shirt,
shocking-blue bird
pecking my feet,
white froth licks—
and you want me to explain
hues of blue,
what it means to capture waves
as though you knew.

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The Station

I exit the station,
enter that scene
again, the rain
those words
get in
simple words
that echo
us against the downpour
as we drove away.
But it is mid-summer now
no downpours
at the station
as I stand beneath
a moon lifting
half dismembered
into a burning apricot sky.
Tears dry hot
and I gasp
taking in
a makeshift caravan
on the horizon
the shoreline of an ancient port
where a Cypress
stands witness
to mercy.

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The Scent of Jasmine

I undress
a whisper of blossom
wafts through the room
before the patter of spring rain.
I cling to the hangers, wailing
in vain
because no one will hear
at midnight plus two
after meeting her for drinks
and talking of you
for two hours cubed
over narratives exchanged
after a year's past and you've passed
and how remarkable it is
that here we both are
and that John at the bar
remembers my name
from evening chats of our summer last
with no mention of you.
She says she can't imagine
how much I must miss you
slips me a white rose
in a hint of pink
while I well within.
I can no longer tell
if it is jasmine
I smell
through the streets
but their blossoms
glance at me sideways
like a wink.
I can hear the steel bars
roll to a clamp

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shield the glass
from what's to come.
The chanting grows
the armed police, the barricade
I echo through the empty streets.
A mantra leads
a Leonard Cohen song
you listened to your summer last
about a waltz
which we both know
has nothing to do with a waltz at all
but of life and loss and longing.
The difference between jasmine
and the hint of what was.

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Showcase

We are both cast
inside our glass chambers
displaying for the other.
You reach into my vitrine
shake off the dust
and flip on the back light
my eyes dart towards the glass
at the passer-byes.
But there is only my reflection
and you sweeping in
catching me off balance,
you in my shadow box
frames and all
tipping the edges
as I swirl in your glance.
The passer-byes no longer exist
it is only us
rearranging the backdrop
just in time
before the light switches off
and you have to re-enter
your vitrine
untouched
frames in place
no fingerprints on the pane.