

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

Richard Luftig
Winter Story

Through the fogged window
he watches a hard rain angle,
each icicle struggling to hang
on to the eaves by its toes.

Best to stay inside with the bare bones
of the day, feel the wisps of loss
sneak through the pane and settle
deep beneath your teeth. Strange,

but you would think the old woodpile
fettered with frost would have learned
that by now. Who is willing to risk
hip and limb to limp to its rescue?

No, he knows better than anyone
to clutch each sadness tight against
his chest, knows that in any moment
he might lose his grip and perish

with no one left to find him when
he tumbles over some unforeseen
occurrence of a fragile and freezing thought
left upswept on the bare kitchen floor.

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The Three Types of Friendships *From the Japanese*

1. A New Acquaintance

He speaks so much, tries on each voice
like a mockingbird who searches
for a mate. Since we have just met,
how rude would it be for me to
disagree with anything he says!

2. One Who is Contentious

He urges me to speak first then
counters like a chessman playing
the black, deflects my every move,
while weakening my positions.
Shall we always remain estranged?

3. An Intimate Friend

How nice to sit and sip our wine
discuss this and that, the profound
and the mundane, agree upon
everything only to discover
I am talking to the mirror.

Swans in Central Park

It is mid-morning when the children
with their nannies and grandparents
come to the park waiting for the warm-up act;
stand-up comedy teams of mallards
and geese honking out their jokes
like Vaudville performers. But then, as if
on cue, they yield the stage to these white-clad
ballerinas, who stretch and intertwine their long,
graceful necks in a silent pas-de-deux.

Along Fifth Avenue, the tree-muffled traffic
is reduced to trumpeting its appreciation
while on the lake bank, the audience grows
and throws bouquets of bread crumbs begging
for encores before departing for lunch and naps,
leaving these beautiful birds to rehearse their swan
songs for the close of their limited engagement
when October, bringing its out-of town previews
off the Hudson, is scheduled to take over the stage.