

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

Simon Perchik

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You lean against her thigh
as if this gravestone
no longer smells from grass

longs for a dry riverbed
not sure you can undress her
even in the dark

though its lettering is stranded
sheltered and your embrace
still breathing in her name

her just-another-word-for-loving-you
that lets you sweat
without moving your lips

still covered by an overnight longing
pulling them apart then emptied
to remember your only hope.

*

These shelves are used to it, pruned
the way stress will age the branches first
—you can hear the tree struggling

bend though each board is already empty
and there's no pillow or water
you can force under to grow as wood

not yet smoke or dust scrambling up
as if all these horizons would collapse
and the charred rag opens over you

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making room for distances and moving closer
–what you stack is absences, her arms
worth keeping, her mouth even in traces.

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It's a short step from winter and the bed
yet you can't hear its sheet narrow, become
the stream pouring from each stone fountain

and graveyard, can't touch her breasts
now that every handful turns to powder
smoothed over the way a motionless cloud

is tracked drop by drop –you count
backwards though every room in this place
is taking on water –what you hear

is the last drop falling through her arm
as a single word –Mickie! louder, louder
and you hold hands, go on drowning.

*

With a sudden glow one leg
begins to bend though your heart
creaks, each step growing sunlight

from rocks the way mountains
flower just by breaking apart
though inside nothing moves

waits to brush against these dead
–they know what happened
write down the place, have the lock

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and you walk by as the same few days
or weeks or now and then
a put-aside-half shows up

just for the view, slowly, as if you
are no longer alive, left as you were
face to face for a long time.

*

There's no shore though all armies
are used to orders, wait to be led
at attention as if this great lawn

was always here, theirs for the taking
would honor their dead the way all statues
begin their slow march to the sea

and nothing change –your mouth
still bleed, gnaw on a single block
left standing for every day use

–you don't shrug or inhale or going down
unveil your broken teeth already inscribed
with the only chance to know you're back.

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Before this door had a chance
your eyes crushed it though the thud
infected only one lid, staggers across

as if its fever was enough to burn down
your forehead trying to stay open
for the fire with nothing in it

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and lift you from beneath
–it's a small place, a few walls
a mountain hanging from a sheet

stained by snow, by corners
each day colder, a valley deeper
cleared for whoever the bed

can carry –your legs pitted from winds
all day scanning your skull
for its madness, for what's left

where your cheeks opened
for sunlight and melting ice –a nothing bed
the kind you find only with X-rays

when the film dries, shows one side
left in darkness, the other
infected with despair and falling.