

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

Elaine Moynahan
No Such Thing

Morning coffee on the deck,
black, one sugar brown,
a splash of cream,
the usual,
the ordinary

until a wisping white
slides across the early blue,
a fragile cloud curling in and out of itself
as if by sly magician's trick
now smoke, now gone.

And then, along the path,
the red of a fox smolders the grass until
he disappears into the shadow mists
of the small dark woods nearby.
And cardinals burn the air

like errant sparks of fire,
the darting swallows but blackened cinders
in their wake. And the brown earth
rises up so wet, so sweet
after the rain,

worms of reddish gray stretching
slowly, slowly,
beetles scurrying fast, fast,
their iridescent backs
moving prisms in the sun.

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And on the rise, the raspberry bursts
with purple flowers and the lady slippers scatter
their orchid blooms about
and the Gray Treefrog trills his song
to the banjo plunk of the Green...

oh, there is no such thing as
ordinary
in the morning.

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And Just So Would I Be Loved *

Spring thaw,
a narrow stream spills from the river
to run in glittering freedom
over the winter-dried bed.
The snowy egret chooses.

Long-legged,
white plumage ruffling,
she stands motionless
for a few moments
in the clear rush of water
then plunges her knife of a black beak down
to impale a silvery swimmer,
raises it up to shimmer in the sun,
offering to the gods above,
before it disappears
down her long curved throat.
Her stalks of black legs and bright yellow feet
carry her a few ripples away,
yellow eyes fixed on the pebbled bottom
for silver and gold.

She never returns.
Each spring we pass by the surging stream
hoping to glimpse
her fringe of white feathers ruffling in the breeze,
her slow methodical majesty.
The blue herons offer themselves at the pond
for admiration
but it is the mystical snowy
that stirs the quick of me.

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But look here,
here beneath my window today
a poor opossum bumbles by,
doggedly slogging
without a home to call his own,
scary-ugly sweet-natured opossum,
king of road kill and garbage cans.

As he looks up at my window
sharp teeth bared,
rope of a tail dragging behind him,
I decide I will love him, too,
and the garden snake that lives inside the hedge
and the slimy slug on my tomatoes;
I will love them all

for the beauty of my youth
has flown forever
as surely as the snowy egret
and I would be loved now as I love them:

simply,
for who they are.

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The Shining*

I step through the wrought iron gate
of my small garden, walk beyond
the wild violets and brilliant of bitter-sweet,
past the mossy oaks

and white rings of fairy mushrooms
that light the dark forest.

I follow the urging river
to the edge of the earth

where I peer down and around
the curves of wonder
to where krill spill their crimson ink
like blood in the sea

and firefly squid electric-blue
Toyama Bay; to where silken saris
of teal and poppy and gold
undulate like a moving mosaic

in the marketplace, baskets
of brown carp and red mangoes
filled to overflowing; to the thirsty Negev
that kisses the salty lips of the Dead Sea

and the Irish fields, kaleidoscope
of iridescent greens; to the streaming blue
of Iceland's steamy lagoons
and the roar and thunder of Serengeti.

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And as I stand on the Bridge of Flowers
whatever it is that is called spirit within
leaves me, without permission,
for it cannot help

but run with the wild-eyed wolf
beneath DeNali's frosted face,
cannot help but thrust up and up from the deeps
with the baleen to break

the water ceiling and breathe
that first pure salted breath.
And as the sun begins its slip,
my wings stretch out fringed and taut

with the red tailed hawk
and, fierce eyes preying,
we rise, rise to the blue
to catch a surge of air home.

When I return
to my peonied and pansied garden
and the sun slides down
behind the mountains

in a molten explosion
of crimson-gold surrender,
I search for words to share
this earth's far and this earth's near

but not one word can bear
the shining.

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Of Willows and Wild Anemones

Early April, dusk,
and in the settling purple,
I pick up my gloom
to wander into the near small woods
searching,
searching for everything and nothing,
touching the lignin
of dead and downed trees,
the rough bark of the living,
the velvet mushrooms lingering
beneath the old oaks.

With the aching of bones
comes an aching of the heart
for things wished done and undone
and a yearning, a need
for misty shapeshifting words
like eternity, soul and death
to crystallize,
Rosetta stones unlocked at last.

I lift a rock,
a beetle sidles out
plum-black as the deepening sky,
annoyed, no doubt,
at the disturbance of his ordinary.
He doesn't need to comprehend
the sun's orbit or moon's pull
to understand
his day isn't ordinary anymore,
to understand
that all he wants or needs is his ordinary.

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Nor is the cottontail aware
of cracks in the earth's crust
or galaxies in flux
and the red vixen watching nearby
knows only she must feed her kits
as does the dragonfish in the deeps.

I return home,
light the dry kindling
under the waiting logs
to chase away the spring chill.
I steep a pot of Bewley's,
lift two shortbread treats
from the tin, let go of the mind's
dark tunnels and shafts and warrens
which never lead to light.
Like the willows and wild anemones
and the sleepy beetle,
I will peace in my ordinary.