

## Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

*Lori Powell*

### **Cello**

If it could play itself  
it would be a better  
salesman than I.

Twice I've tried to make it  
an instrument of cash;  
twice the would-be buyers  
examine me instead:

why am I selling?

Will I play again?

As I walk back to the car  
it bumps against my leg.

"Difficult child," I say.

"What sort of instrument are you?"

And place her again  
in a corner of my room  
where she reclines -  
scrolled neck, box  
of shapely air -  
and plays back to me  
the question played on her:  
difficult child, what  
sort of instrument are you?

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### In Brazil

Dogs trot along the sides of roads  
and through supermarket parking lots,  
lean and focused as itinerant salesmen.  
I imagine leashed lives for them,  
hunks of meat, regular caresses.  
Don't touch them, warns my host.

A continent away, the things  
I have touched wait for me:  
a quiet ambush of possessions.  
My thoughts brush lightly over them,  
keeping them free of dust.

Here in Brazil, I wake  
each morning to the same  
square of sky in the open window  
and watch sunlight  
slide along banana leaves.  
It is like walking out of the sea  
again and again to find  
the same perfect shell.  
I pick it up.  
I take it home.

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### Fallen

It's quiet again.  
Just a sliver  
of movement,  
the white edge  
of a hem flicking  
around a corner,  
as if the people  
are still leaving  
even after  
the door has closed.

I walk in the woods  
where the leaves  
are fallen shin-deep,  
lost of all but brown.  
If only there weren't  
so many of them,  
or if my feet could climb  
above them  
to some new level  
where color is possible,  
and movement,  
and voices.

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It's quiet. Just  
the easy massacre  
of leaves underfoot,  
the brown  
static of thoughts  
veering in and out  
of focus. I don't know  
what to say.  
Anyway, the people  
to say it to are gone.  
You are gone  
so far into quiet  
that quiet  
glows like a rainbow.  
Even the dead leaves  
rise up in riot.