

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/2

Simon Perchik

So you let the water boil
as if you were not yet born
and already breathing it

can barely make out the bubbles
burdened by sunlight
the way some ancient sea

struggles inside, hangs on to bells
-it's a battered pot, beaten
and the dead who still ask why reefs

are needed now that your throat
is so heavy from cup after cup
and the few tears left over

for a single heart that would become
yours, is floating toward you
emptied for shade and piece by piece.

This field has so many lips
and though the fire is out
these clouds still darken -each breath

overflows with icy streams
and stones left out to dry -it's natural
for a sky to let itself in

the way your shadow on impulse
looks down and in the open
grieves with the only mouth it knows

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-you've done this before, her grave
rubbed between your hands
and the one wish more, each time

the mist along the edge
falls off in flames, becomes
on and on no other place to go

unrolls this gravel path
still counting on your fingers
sure its hunch is right.



Though there's no leak your hand
at every turn makes the adjustment
takes hold the way this wrench

begins as mountainside, workable
picked up and the pebble dragged off
circles down, carving out her name

and from your mouth the stutter
tighter, tighter -it's all about the water
isn't it? a spill in that slow descent

streams still trace, first
to break apart then colder, colder
looking around at what escaped

and what was captured, taken away
to remind your voice how every word
is spelled, is stone drained from stone

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struggling in ravines and for a long time
an absence that that is not water
pulling you back with these two fingers.



Louder! though what comes by
has already withered
and along a certain curve

your voice tapers off
as the path bent over her shoulders
spreading its flow into sunlight

now riverbank and whisper
-you need two mouths
now that every splash

smells from stones
once it rises to the surface
in that slow climbing turn

covered with winter
and her name just beginning
-yell it! face the sky

still pinned to her grave
and by the handful each breath
half closed, half more dirt.



She wraps your limp the way the sun
marks out its darkness and along the ground
pours a small circle -you'll make it back

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she says, writes on a pad kept open
how seabirds will call each other
over and over force their feathers

though your shadow too has taken on
that phase even the moon
with all its rivers and stars

-just two pills and at bedtime two more
which stone by stone will become
a second moon once you lay down

face up, floating midair, not yet asleep
reaching around the Earth
that stops as soon as you touch it.