

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/3

Christina Murphy
Scheherazade's Kiss

"What in this unpleated world isn't someone's seduction?"

—Jane Hirshfield

The striations of the light harden like a drumhead over riverine valleys so that sounds are solid but muted and all loneliness sounds like grief. Your heart hangs by strange emotional wires. The miasma of your spirit is deep and long.

In the bleakest of moments, when nothing seems reasonable or worthwhile, you wonder if the actual has betrayed you, and you long for fantasies of imagined worlds to ease an empty and wounded heart. Your spirit longs to know if hope can be found in the beauty of the telling.

Scheherazade looks lovely and inviting, but her gift for tale upon tale is a lover's gift for permutations. And are permutations real or only tempting? The imagination is capable of it all, as you know. Every distortion is possible and possibly even desired.

Scheherazade casts a handful of stars upon the river, and they float away in silvery beauty. Then she turns to you and asks if philosophy is wise or only the magic show of the mind?

Of course you wish to answer it is wise, but you pause to wonder if it is perhaps just surreal.

I will tell you, she replies. And she kisses you. Your head spins. There are certain paths to El Dorado, and you are on one now. The trees move with the wind in soft gestures and sounds, and your life is more magical than all the illusions you have ever pursued or abandoned.

You must be committed to life, she says. Exhilaration is found only in the bite of the real fruit and not its image.

You are working on taking this in, but what you want most is another kiss. You can tell from her eyes the kiss was the fruit, and your exhilaration is to be had only in the moment.

*Knowledge is like this, **she says.** It lingers in the mind for a moment, like an after taste—or a kiss.*

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/3

She is smiling at you, and you know that the kiss is its own tale, with a destiny that emerged from the past long before the world could even name what it longed for. You make your peace with the longing, knowing that dualities have never saved the world—and never will.

You nod. She begins her tale. You are listening to the tale and forming a context. You imagine somewhere the tale moves along with a current through valleys in need of rebirth. What rides upon the current will open the hillsides and affirm the power of love to create. Create the real, the surreal, and the longing—all anew and vibrant.

You must be committed to life, you hear her say again. Life, the greatest dream.

And you agree.

She comes to you, embraces you gently. *And a kiss for you, dear, because I am as real as you are—at least in your dreams.*