

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/3

Loren Kleinman
America, the Beautiful

This is America,
the dark house of fiction,
the dark horse,
the battle ground.

This is the place
where I danced
with my mother
in the den
before she was drunk
and chose wine
over her daughter.

This state, NJ,
is where I grew up
and lived for 30 years
in a home full of love,
drunk love
and non love.

Mother,
my mother,
she's her own country,

her borders closed,
highways full of inspectors,
streets turning
and winding with detours,
all under construction.

I miss her.

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I wish she'd give up appearances,
the beer, the white wine,
the red wine,
how it makes her foreign,
the other reality,
shiny with red drunk cheeks.

I remember loving her once
in long sober hugs.

This is my song for her:
my mother,
my mother,
the beautiful.

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I'm a Door

I'm a door,
hungry and dreaming,
the opening to a house
made of skin and bone.

I remember living
when I was a child,
playing in my mother's house,
toys scattered on the floor
next to the chair and desk,
or near the window,
and mother calling me
under the exposed light.

I'm a passage
through which I,
the one I was before,
walked, wanting warmth,

the small feeling
of pushing the door open
and looking past it,
alone.

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Memory, Like a Washing Machine

I imagine you here
in the secret place,
the whirl
of my memory
like a washing machine.

I'm hanging from the ceiling,
a chandelier.

The thought of our past
tortures me,
reminds me
you're-not-here,
you're-not-ever-coming-back,
ever, never.

Fossilized love,
I'm a human water board.

A waterfall forces me to the bottom
of a sandy ravine,
fish nibbling at my toes,

the water, shining
like grief.

I swim to get away,
to live without you
one day,
the day after
and 50,000 years later.

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I'll Never Leave You

Did you ever love me?

I lived inside your lung once,
a blue bird
in your fleshy nest.
You took care of me.

How did you hold me? Remind me.

I pressed my face against
the cool glass of the window
and howled
as you walked past.

And then—

And then I walked naked
along the empty streets
while everyone was asleep

and we met in the middle
of our neighbor's front lawn,
our kisses curling up the grass.

Why did you go away?

I wrote you a poem
with lipstick.

My lips stained
the last stanza.

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My Body Opens

A tulip blooms
between my breasts.

A petal
shaky and falling
from the wind
glitters like a star
under my nipple.

My body closes
after the flower blooms,
stitches itself up
down the middle
of my torso.

A smudge of blood
at the seam.
A fingerprint
and a petal.