

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

Holly Day
Even This

My mother says it's a sign of depression
to become obsessed with learning how to do
new things. Or maybe she means
"The Depression." I'm not sure.

The shelves in my office are overflowing
with books about home repair
reconditioning furniture
Cub scout survival guides.
I busy my head in making
new seats for the tattered dining chairs
needlepoint projects to make old things look nice

my husband comes home from work
notices nothing. Sits heavy on the newly-recovered
couch, talks of depression
or The Depression, sighs so deep I
can't tell which.

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Love

he goes out with his friends and I
stay home and get drunk, drunk enough
to get my speech almost right
the things I need to say when he comes home

but all I can say when he steps through the door
is how much I love him, how I know
how Martha Washington felt when she first
set her eyes on George, the thrill Nelly felt
when James Madison lifted her over the threshold

that my passion feels timeless, limitless
something for history books and petroglyphs
and even with all the alcohol stumbling my lips
some things I say can be understood

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Mother

she sits across from the tiny bed
a length of red cord twisted tight in her hands
resolve finally strong, enough to be in this room
but not enough to close the gap
between her and her children
curled sleeping in bed

when things grew bad I knew I had to die
that I couldn't go one step further

she thinks of the husband who refuses to work
sitting out back, drinking beer with his friends
one hand resting on the bare-brown thigh
of the girl from next door who sort of thinks he's cute
and the world is about to crash and fall apart
but if she's gone, her children will starve
and she hasn't eaten for days

if I do it, they have to come too
I can't leave my children to be abandoned by him

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Sunset

we watch the bombs bloom through the windows
pass the potatoes, turkey, corn
say grace over tightly-clenched hands

here is our peace.

through the windows, the sky grows dark, then red
we turn up the gas on the propane lamps
clear the dinner table, light a fire

spread blankets over the children, falling asleep.

the sky grows dark, then red, then black
the window glass glistens against the heat
I lay next to my husband, put my head on his chest

close my eyes and make one last little wish.

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Dust Storm

I step off the train and change
my name to Preacher, life in a bag
on my back, from this point on
I am this new man.

I spread my life out on the ground
Bible, empty shell casings, empty flask.
The casings and the flask will stay empty
the Bible will keep me full. Behind me
children scream on the park carousel
this can be home for a while.

I step off the curb and head downtown
there is always work to be found for a man
named Preacher. With work comes money
with money, food, a home.
The flask will stay empty.
The Bible will keep me full.