

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

Rose Betit

how it was

mama had a world of worry
behind her false teeth
that she clacked around
when she felt overwhelmed
or mad
but mostly overwhelmed
by how her children's imaginings
changed into yearnings
of the almost unattainable sort
yearnings for things
like unbegged for food
from the Pac-A-Sac
and unborrowed water
in plastic buckets
when god didn't see fit to send rain.

"oh, Jesus" she said,
"my children are hungry."
and Jesus in the painting
just stared across the room
at the ragged curtains
waving in the breeze.

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landing place

she would have been a place for them to land,
her children, newly minted worker bees
just in case they needed it.

she would have been,
but finds herself, instead, stuck in a crevasse,
a place between useful and uselessness.

in the morning at sunrise
she is grey light,
a stalemate in autumn.

while Canadian geese fly south to the States.
on a cacophony of rallying honks,
even they know where to land.

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condition

the way the morning shadows
stretch themselves across the ceiling
and walls in ribbons
reminds me how we are comprised
of geometric haze
inumbrate and estranged
from simplicity
with the way we often try
to force a curve into a straight line.

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another memory of mother

smoke rising like witches' fingers
pointing swaying, curving in dance
grey puffs from mother's nose,
a cartoon bull on saturday morning
monoxide romancing the apricot plant
its fleshy roots floating like
a fetus in a jar of water on the windowsill.

nicotined fruits we're having for lunch -
or not.

the leaves, she says,
are too green,
too pretty to kill.
she thinks she'll just have
her cigarette and coffee.
and we? oh, we'll be alright
with just toast.