

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/1

Jennifer Hollie Bowles
Obscure Lust

Is it sane to covet blue
eyes composed of ash?

I love him like a poker game cheated
well, a hairbrush used on a willow tree.

Fingers, is it normal for you to obey
a mind that tells you to pull the trigger?

Please tell me why his suicide
speaks louder than my life.

Cunt, is it wise for you to spread
for a man that reminds you of Daddy?

My pride is gone; it's a knife
stuck in an albatross.

I fall from heights of verbal towers,
so I can crush his lofty residue.

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The Surgeon General's Birds

Warning: this poem may cause big-toe cancer, left-knee twinges, and sleeplessness. May contain vomit and a metaphor for birds. This product was created on the same equipment that processes nuts.

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Rising

I have come with my nettles leaves
to give you what He can't take from me,
and you'll never know who I am, until
she awakens yesterday in the East
somewhere between Chesed and Gevurah.

Tell Michael and Ambriel I said hello
because I'm too busy raking their
skies...you want your Queen here,
solid and real, but do you know
how to reach the veins of every leaf?

I have come with infinity breathing
and wrapped myself in willow leaves,
no longer a human machine, just a
basket full of poreless hands that
flap-twirl vibrations with Shakti.

Tell God—regards.

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Requiem for an Abuser

The funeral director wants to know
why I'm not crying. He swears that you still
gasp on occasion, but I tell him that the pipe
organ will do fine for music, maybe a little
"Norwegian Wood" or "White Room."
I'll put the cracked Christmas ornament
and the Steampunk clock in the coffin
with you, and I'll try to hide my sneer when your
uncle reads the trumped-up eulogy. I figure by then
you will have stopped gasping, the ancient poison
having infiltrated your cells, but I'll lean in now
and whisper into your ear, "Your drunken breath
disgusted me. Your mother hates cooking
dinner for you. All the heroes you ever dreamed
were just little plastic GI Joe men with broken
legs. Sssh, don't try to say my name.
Don't beg. There are no antidotes. I once
loved you, but now you remind me of my father.
You can't own me, and our daughters will never
be anything like you." I'll wear a black Alice smile
underneath my veil at the funeral, and thank
all the gods that I'm no longer your wife,
prodding-pole, or charwoman.
When you are underground, dear,
I will dance ecstatic.

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From motives of prayers

She has a Tai-Chi heart that swells
like beans in water, swims with the move-
ment of Koi, and accepts enigma as layered
yet cohesive, like the entrails of a pumpkin...
so disengaged from the Western concept of sin

Disappearing from motives
of prayers
into temperate blue flames

She lives in the distant lightning of their first
kiss, but feels doubtful of middle-age gifts,
the ennui of organized living, the security
of seeing snow fall from a warm bedroom

Disappearing from motives
of prayers
into temperate blue flames

She breathes in a wish that rejects dubious
love, intuits generations of tragedy breathing
in her genes, until her pores concoct a little
purified matricide for her grandmother's mother

Disappearing from motives
of prayers
into temperate blue flames