

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/2

April Salzano

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

In the beginning, cut off
jean shorts and t-shirts, jobs
at gas stations and lakeside restaurants,
we said marriage wasn't permanent.
That we didn't care, we would go ahead.
That it was enough
to have introduced our souls, as if they
were independent of the rest of us, heart,
body. Two breathing ghosts of vapor
who wouldn't mind the weather
of divorce. Gale force winds that uproot
trees and homes, leave
children as artifacts,
nouns in custody
orders, plaintiff's needs
for survival.
And so when it came to pass,
just as we said it would,
twelve years later,
that self-imposed curse, you swore
you were not surprised, not taken
aback as I was, a face looking forward
to the floor, reaching for a false bottom
that had long ago fallen out.

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The Weekend for Dying

I will remember these things as synonymous:
the blessing of my friend's mother giving up
her fight to stay alive, tired, twelve hours
early, waiting for her daughter to drive two hours
back to a city that would no longer hold
meaning. That landmarks had already begun
to fade from significance at the end of August.
That this was the day after my son's eighth birthday
in another climate entirely, eight hours away.
That it had been five years, six days
since my father's kidneys refused their last
dialysis treatment, one day
before my ex mother-in-law was watching
television one minute, dead the next.
That it was two days before her husband's birthday,
which is one day before my own. That it was the same
day my second husband's best friend's brother-in-law
fell from a hay bale and had a fatal heart attack,
or had a fatal heart attack and fell from a hay bale.
No one will ever know which. I will remember that
tragedy is always personal,
no matter how far removed, that death wears
more faces than one person in one weekend can
hope to count.

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From Age This Comment

At least it keeps you moving, the old people say as they limp, Q-tip-headed, to locker room and swimming pool, loosen arthritic joints, atrophying muscle. I want to imagine not having anything but coupons for acid reducers sent in rambling letters about grandchildren and visits to the doctor. But I cannot think that far ahead, even when my knees crack, back stiffens from the wrong position. Heartburn and black coffee go hand in hand here, the space between youth and slow descent into death's early stages, limbo of life. I am stuck in the land of foreshadowing I try my best to ignore.