

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/3

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REMINDERS

WHEN IN LOVE, do you find yourself always in the process of waiting for your beloved, even when you are together? The event of being fed fruit by a beautiful girl can convince you that you are happy. Do not let yourself be convinced.

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A smile that looks like a secret let out of a cage is always a fearful bet. You will forget the customs that bind you when you are permitted into the lair of a girl. Ana chose the locker next to mine on the third day. New on the team, bright cheeks. I knew about the locker rooms. It was my last year. I was eighteen. I had learned how to look without looking.

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Don't ask me about regret. Regret is never a relevant question. I could smell her on my hands when I drove home. When I touched her I felt like I knew something I hadn't known before. Newness does not require apology.

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Do you remember, as a very young person, spending equal amounts of energy in attempts to enjoy yourself and to avoid humiliation? Later, my father told me queerness is the easier choice: connection and understanding are unimpeded between women. There is a natural, illicit intimacy in both enjoying acting as the architect of sex and recalling the memory of your own similar experience. Women are most attractive when pleased and tired, and so are you.

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Mutual anticipation of a kiss is, as a general rule, more intimate and intense than the kiss manifested. When a kiss must be forgiven, laugh. The laughter is shiny and orange; it fills rooms and makes excuses. Laugh especially if you suspect you may require forgiveness, but feel privately that you do not regret the kiss. She may interpret your laughter as effervescent and appealing.

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Ana was wearing track shorts and a thin gold necklace. Squeezed into the last stall in the bathroom in the science wing, we left the faucet running; it was loud and ambivalent. Ana's hips rose. I heard her breath like a rising surf. Take notice: your own inexorable presence in your life does not name you as the maker of its rules. The private conviction that you are good will not guarantee that the protections of law and convention apply to you.

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It is safer to be liked than loved. When the ownership of loyalty begins to feel comforting, be reminded that it is in fact dangerous. The sense of having become something to be suffered by another person will some-

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/3

times emerge in a binding love. Your responsibility extends not only to fear you have instilled but to fear that has awoken on your behalf.

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High school was a wide cage. It asked only attention and rewarded love with space. We did not know how to be girls together. It felt like jumping into a warm pool. Ana said, "my own body reminds me of you." I felt tender and kind, and I assumed this meant I was right.

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Do you find yourself feeling for the object of your affection most keenly when she is deep in the company of others, charming and persuasive? Private intimacy will reveal itself as less captivating. It is comfortable to believe that much can be accomplished when approached in earnest. Let this be a reminder that you are easily and regularly thwarted.

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In the winter I found Ana's sister in the east lockers. She looked like a scared animal. We had known each other as children, made small talk in the cafeteria lines. "Don't fucking look at me," Liz said, "nothing to see here." I was losing the game. Try to remember that only mild irrelevance ensures the avoidance of hostility. "Dykes," Liz said, walked out carrying her shoes.

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Childishness will not disappear when it is deemed inappropriate. Ana, at fourteen, long-legged and mermaid-haired, touched her father's arm when he cornered me in the driveway, but did not push. When you are told that your actions are immoral, consider not the truth or untruth of the accusation but its implications. You can no longer think like a child; if you are convicted, you will spend time in a prison built to contain adult crimes.

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It says in the transcript that the affiant asked if I knew it was wrong to have sex with Ana due to Ana being fourteen years old. There are questions for which there are too many answers and they all get stuck to each other like Milk Duds left in the sun in the package. All of the answers melt and become impossible.

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Ana had her first cigarette in the backseat of my car and asked if we were real. She didn't like the taste and put it out underneath the headrest. She didn't tell me it was her first but I knew. If we weren't real something was wrong, but everyone said things were wrong then. I felt like I was supposed to know. I had a feeling about it like when someone asks you how you're doing and you say good even if you feel like a drained pool. There are moments when it is not dishonest to pretend.

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In my kept days in the house after everything was finished what I thought about was what Ana had said about bodies. Once, before, in the

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/3

empty gymnasium, she jumped up to the net. She was predatory, streamlined, new. I watched her and victory rang through the me like unexpected bread before dinner. I couldn't jump with the tether on my ankle. My mother opened the top cupboards for me in the kitchen.

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In February, we woke up crying. It is not possible to die from crying. Mascara is not, in fact, waterproof. When you are dirty, you will feel more tired. It is possible to die from too much salt; there was a boy who died in Texas once. We didn't know how, how much was enough.

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Everything is always so important. Men will sometimes wake up beside you unaware that you have not slept, even after you are married. Memory cannot be shared. Intimacy will not bestow intuition. When you are lied to, do not apologize for having provoked it. When you lie, do not tell yourself you had no choice.