

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/3

Tennae Maki

Craving coffee with cream

The porcelain sink could do with
a toothbrush and a bit of scrubbing.
It is smeared with diluted rust.
Its surface doesn't look anything like
that frilly doll sitting above the cupboard.

Even though they say that her face is
made of the same material as this old sink.
It's hard to believe that these two things
share a commonality with the porcelain
tea cups collecting dust on the shelf.

I lean over the sink and splash water
on my face. For just a moment,
I pretend that the basin is all I have to
use to keep my body clean; just as it was
when this old farm house was first built.

My grandmother told me that her father
built it with his brothers.
There's a carton of cream in the refrigerator.
She and I used to drink coffee in the mornings;
here in this old house.
Even she didn't use the tea cups, but she
kept them clean anyways.
Before she died, she was as feeble as that doll.

I would lean over her and would cautiously
give her hugs.

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The cream is fresh. It was the only thing
I bought before I came.

It's curious. I wonder where the
rust in the sink came from. No one has
been here to turn the water on and off.

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What's left to fall

The air was wet from the night before.
A cool damp had been spread across the
floor like a thin layer of glaze.
But it wasn't shiny, just then.
That floor probably never had been.

Even when it was laid anew,
surly the fresh boards
were cut with a dry axe.
Who knew how long ago that had been.
The rings that encircled the knots
and the fraying grain had stopped
telling their own story long ago.

More than just the damp could be
seen on those dark oak planks.
A dusting of seeds and fluff seemed
to have been strewn across them.
It was as if someone had taken an
enormous bouquet of dandelions,
with heads of fuzz and put it against
the howling wind.

Some of these white, weightless balls
lay flat against the ground.
While the others danced around
the nearly bare circular room.
Spinning and whirling, some
hovered close to the ground
while other bits flew to the top
of the tower.

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And then there were some, that had
escaped from the room all together.
After all, they really hadn't
been dropped within the space
by some hidden hand.
Nor had they risen from the floor
boards by the distant hum
beneath them. The snow had
fluttered in from the deep
gothic windows slated against
the shaky walls.

Unlike the snow fluff,
the seeds had been dropped there,
in that room. They had fallen from
a bag and rolled into the crevices of
the floor.

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The morning I shared their stoop.

The sun shined upon the sleepy bodega
beneath the awning an old man fastening strings
to bouquets

I stood before the flower display
disappointed that there weren't any faint
pink roses counted amongst the spread

For a moment I looked away,
only to turn back,
to grasp a thorny ruby bunch
resolving that the
color reminded me of my
mother's makeup compact

I hardly whispered a word to
the old man arranging the flora
It really was that kind of morning

The kind of day
where I could be seen walking away
with my backpack slugged over my shoulder
and a dozen pink roses in hand, hanging upside down.

Soon afterwards, I passed a funeral home
with men in suits smoking on the steps.