

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/4

Robert K. Johnson

In The Years After You Were Born

Given the gift of a daughter,
I gained a shared oasis
of love that will always be
lush with leaf-heavy trees,
the cool water of a pool,
and an air whose silence we scatter
with our rapid talk and laughter.
Or so I thought.

Instead,

you've chosen--why?--to live
as if high on a hill in a house
with a locked front door,
and all I can do, on the days
you sit on your balcony,
is call up to you, hoping
that you will turn, smile
and speak to me.

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Water Colors

(In Memory of Helen White)

Drop by drop,
the autumn rain
has slowly subdued

the red and gold
brightness of the leaves

scattered on lawns
or still dangling low
on curbside trees.

Yet the leaves
have not surrendered.

Painted with wetness,
by noon they fill
my whole neighborhood

with the glory
of their soft glow.

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Our Times Together
(for my brother)

Knowing the length of time I take,
you phone precisely when I, at my age,

should be off the highway and back at my house
after our time together. Though sad
you're so fearful about my safe return,

I'm glad you call, glad to hear
the love in your voice, glad it is you,
even older than I am, on the phone

instead of someone who softly tells me
the worst possible news about you.