

Wilderness House Literary Review 12/1

Peter Leight

Diary of a House

I spend my time between the walls
pretending I'm myself,
I call it *playing house*.
You don't really experience what you're inside of.
I think I'm opening up—openness is an idea with a lot of others inside it,
all the others actually,
I'm trying to be flexible,
turning all the knobs.
I'd like to get out,
I often imagine being outside, going both ways like a kind of arbitrage—
not putting anything on,
I'm not wearing anything at all,
if I end up getting pregnant I'm going to keep the baby,
I'm not giving the child away,
because it is easier to love than to be loved.
I think I'll like it more
or a lot more.
I'm trying to be economical,
I've been thinking,
I'd like to have a door in every wall, a window in every door, before there
are locks I want to have the keys,
on the keys tiny mountains
seen in silhouette.
Every day I set the table,
as if hunger is a feeling for what is lacking
and soon to be,
what if it is also a sense of the possibly unavailable?
Inside it is room temperature.
When I'm inside I close the door,
taking out the splinters and putting them away for safe keeping,
in the darkness I twist the sheets until they're all tangled up,
not from anger or fear
but nobody wants to disappear.

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The Mother of Us All

It doesn't matter what happens,
we think *let the mother deal with it*.
She's been patient for a long time.
In the picture she's looking at something outside the picture, you can tell
from the way her eyes slide to the side.
Her hands are in front of her,
rising from the low cakes
to the high cakes—
a layer of ladyfingers in the bottom of the bowl,
the waxy gloss of royal icing.
If you're not a mother you're a mother in waiting,
or based on a mother,
or else the child of a mother,
or else picking up where the mother leaves off.
It's convenient that the mother is lenient
as long as we're being obedient.
In pictures at the time her eyes are balanced like lime and ash,
it doesn't have to be masculine and it doesn't have to be feminine,
if it's not one thing
it's something else.
A glance is all she has to spare.