

Wilderness House Literary Review 12/3

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If I Asked the Trees to Take Me In

Walking the woods
near the Maumee, I am aware
by the owl's whistling that the town is asleep.

It rained all day as I watched
the world deepen. Trees
became trees, seemed to rise
even as their roots sunk.
Now the river cuts
even into me.

If I asked the trees to take me in,
would they dissolve, allowing
my little sound?

The mouse. Yes, I released its little love
into the woods here last winter.
Where it ran from the humane trap
and immediately burrowed into snow
at the base of a tree.

So I return home to sit by the fire
just as it returned to a wood hutch,
to a pouch of snow.
Now I am thinking of sheep.
The long night.
The dog who protects them
and their breath blurring the foggy cold.
The long night cutting into itself
as nights do when they are too long
for me to find release.
The hound who protects me
from the sharpening wind.

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The creaking trees.
Her slow breath in the dark.
The lights of houses soaking
the wind out of itself.
My hound dog's breathing breathing me deep.
The Air Was Always Beautiful

Then I emerged that life, briefly, as a centipede.
I had carried over the karma of math and needed to learn to count on myself for
everything.

That's not a joke.
Forgive me if I believed I'd never live past 100.

Then I was human again, this time a childhood chess master from Peru.
I remember grieving the copper miners whose veins corroded like neglected knob and
tube, who coughed as if they were in love with death.

This was a long time ago.
There were decades of black and red, knights mounting bishops, bishops
gripping their
groin, wanting to jump the queen.

The air was always beautiful.
I kept a bird in my chest and periodically asked it to teach me how to swim.

Now the carpet cleaners have come, bringing me a formula for dust mites.
They seem baffled when I say, I could never kill another living thing.
The Only Light Is the Blackness of Her Fur

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These woods are never cold.
The boy-child I was and sometimes am.
Say we could all survive if finally kissed just right.
The owl carries away skunk-babies
and leaves me with the stink.

I know I sound obsessed.
But a hound dog sleeping before me
is a calming in my heart.
And the small things I was and am.
Let them float away with the stink.

The wood stove questions the cold.
The snoring is a gift.
I wonder what she dreams.
Too many nights I'm here but drifting toward regret.
And the only light is the blackness of her fur.

Autumn, disguised as rain, is coming for me.
Dressed in fatigues, the season battles itself.
I left the woods once but won't again.
Sycamore. Hickory. Elm. Trees are of me. In me.
And the owl's terrible terrible tearing of mouse flesh and meat.