

## Wilderness House Literary Review 15/2

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**A Fairy Tale**

Once upon a time when I was ten or twelve or both I cleaned up the table after dinner while my mother readied herself for card club, or The Water Buffaloes, which is what my father called her neighborhood card club because he hated women, especially fat women.

Once upon a time I picked up three beige plates with brown edging, scraped the bits of au gratin potatoes, roast beef, and canned green beans into the garbage tucked under the opening in the cupboard where the dishwasher was supposed to be.

Once upon a time I picked up heavy silverware and three filmy milk glasses, a clear glass pan one third full of potatoes along with an oblong beige plate sporting scraps of beef and a pool of brown-red blood. I set them on the counter top and in the sink and ran water and squirted blue Dawn underneath the cascading faucet.

Once upon a time there was a mountain of shiny bubbles in a kitchen sink.

Once upon a time my mother walked out the front door into the cold in flimsy, narrow shoes to attend her Water Buffalo Card Club Meeting.

Once upon a time a bubble mountain melted into stainless steel and began the process of crusting the bottom of the sink and I walked up the golden shag stairs in my shorts and tennis shoes and baggy softball t-shirt.

Once upon a time I slouched in a red kitchen chair in a coffee house on Nicollet Avenue. I pushed on my eyes and watched cars bounce off snowy curbs and excited people preparing for New Years Eve 2009. I watched a fat Christmas tree with red, green, and gold lights shine down the block, framed by a fire hydrant and a *No Parking* street sign.

Once upon a time, as I did this in 2009, I wondered about life.

Once upon a time a young girl in shorts and a baggy t-shirt sat on grass green carpeting with her back against a couch watching *The Love Boat* while her mother was playing cards with some thin and some average and some overweight women. The girl tried not to think.

Once upon a time there was a cotton string wicking kerosene.

Once upon a time a father broke into his daughter but felt the urge to whip her beforehand. His flame lit her panic. He dragged her kicking and screaming from a boat to her bedroom and stripped his belt through his loops and tried to hold her down.

Once upon a time a young girl was about to be whipped and broken into and she realized her body had grown large enough although not quite to the size of a water buffalo (she was only twelve). When her dad slithered his belt from its last loop her body kicked and screamed and hit to stop the leather wrapped round his hand like boxer's tape from bleeding her.

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Once upon a time a father went to break his daughter like he always did when her mother went to her Secret Water Buffalo Meetings where nuts of every kind were available in smoked glass bowls and fancy tins with the lids tucked beneath.

Once upon a time at Secret Water Buffalo Meetings there was talk of soccer games and tornadoes and canning rhubarb and husbands' hearts but not other things not fit to be printed as no one would address the screaming that arose like whirling smoke signals from a house where a woman with flimsy shoes walked in and out of the cold while her daughter tried not to think.

Once upon a time a young girl, perhaps the age of twelve, grew a body big enough to wrestle her father to the ground, steal his leather slip, thereby becoming the first girl pro wrestler in the state of Minnesota all the while no one noticed her professional status except for Hulk Hogan, friend of Vince Gagne, friend of aforementioned girl's future high school soccer coach.

Once upon a time spiders wove tight faux hemp webs and shouted in unison: *Oh the webs we weave!* before breaking for a snack of Russian Tea Cakes, extra powdered sugar.

Once upon a time a girl, quite young in comparison to a ninety-year-old donkey, donned a backward baseball hat salvaged from a local TV station and wrapped her father's leather belt slip twice around her young waist and buckled it and rode a water buffalo down the aisle to center ring and thereafter wrestled whatever riff raff came her way. This is how she earned her bread.

Once upon a time a girl grew into an old girl with an eventually emerging adult body of a female which she worked terrifically hard in fear of becoming a member of the Secret Water Buffalo Club. While her body grew not all of her mind and not all of her emotions developed and she was fucked, yet still sat in red kitchen chairs reminiscing about her professional wrestling days whether they are acknowledged by others or not.

Once upon a time the truth was the truth no matter what and water buffaloes roamed the streets of suburbs in flimsy shoes, ignoring their homes.