

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/3

Claire Scott

ORACLE IN OAKLAND

It's about time we have a few local oracles
maybe one right here in Oakland, California
where lord knows we could use a little advice.

Of course best to choose a woman like Pythia,
the oracle at Delphi, although a lottery would be fairest,
guaranteeing all who identify as women receive a free

ticket. Yes, even you with the scraggly beard if your pronouns
are she, her, hers. No need for a picture ID or proof
of a ten-year residency right here in sunny Oakland, California.

So off we go to the grand opening at Jack London Square,
complete with colorful togas and paeans to our main man Apollo.
We ask our burning question: *Can we wear pajama bottoms to Zoom meetings?*

Through the acrid fumes we hear: *When the bird comes you will know.*
We obsess over every sparrow, every finch, even a crow or two
looking for a sign until suddenly we realize

wait a minute, no money back guarantee,
no way to sue for malpractice, any inconsistencies
are simply a failure to correctly interpret the response.

Think of poor Croesus who consulted the Pythian
Priestess before attacking Persia.
If Croesus goes to war, he will destroy a great empire.

Croesus, sure it was favorable, went to war.
He lost his empire and was burned alive.
Sorry Croesus, *caveat emptor.*

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So maybe think twice before dropping several thou
at Cutting Edge Oracle right here in Oakland, California.
Maybe use a Magic 8-Ball to ask if a small sip of Clorox

will prevent Covid. You may get *ask again later,*
reply hazy, better not tell you now or don't count on it,
but it only costs \$9.99 at Amazon.

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/3

keeping score

The score 983 to 735
he's quite a bit ahead
(as you can see)
46 points for washing my car
52 for buying me flowers
minus 10 because slightly wilted
I lost 66 points when I called him fuck face
after he watched four hours of women's
beach volleyball, focused on barely-there bikinis
and 358 when I dropped our tax return in the toilet
but wait, just in
579 points for fixing his phlegmatic computer
saving us a small fortune
I gloat and glee around the room
eternally grateful to You Tube
the god of Fixing All Things
I love this game
but the score suddenly shifts
I lose 937 points for flouncing & swaggering
I collapse on the sofa & swig straight gin
(lose 88 more points)
who cares
stupid ledger
stupid game

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CUTTING ONIONS

My husband is cutting an onion with a spoon,
an almost impossible task. I notice
there's a lock on the drawer with knives,
the first drawer on the left, under the counter.
Is he slow-sliding into dementia? Our kids

are long gone, no need to hide knives, especially
since I just sharpened my Kyoku carving knife
to slice tonight's roast chicken. What of the row
of wine bottles lined up like empty soldiers?
Did he pour out all that expensive chardonnay?

And where is the thick cotton clothes line
that just arrived from Amazon,
the god of Good Things? I watched
a YouTube video on how to make a clove hitch
that won't come untied, even under the weight of wet sheets.

Is it time to call Dr. Campbell? Am I losing my husband
to a one-way disease? Could Aricept help?
What of coconut oil or Coral calcium
or maybe twenty jumping jacks a day?
The onion is reduced to a soggy goo.

My husband frowns and tosses it in the trash.
For sure a call to Dr. Campbell first thing in the morning.
Tonight I will drive across the Golden Gate Bridge
and gaze down at the currents of swirling water.
If only I could find my car keys.