

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/4

Holly Day

Your Hand in Mine

The sun shines brightly as your voice
is still in the air, subtle constant
a warning echo of your passage. That day
smiling at somewhere
is a photograph of me.

Leaves appear on trees as conversations
slowly unfold green between us
as timorous as field mouse paws
resting delicately on plastic garbage bags
filled with possibility.

I long to face this spring dead-on, reconstruct
these last death throes of love
as anything but.

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Bad Things Happened

We could feel the spirits only when we sat by the walls. There was something left behind by those who sat just there, under His eyes, in the back row of hard, wooden pews the fear of God. There was such an obvious difference between where the good Christians and the bad Christians sat in that place.

They were as powerful as they were exotic, the ghosts of terror, His omniscience, the flapping of stained sheets just out of sight. Their eyes bent spades into old train cars huddled shadows in the rusty quiet, dreams of wheels turning.

I wanted so badly to stand in the room as a light to take a small bit of their pain into me and survive it all next time. There are bodies in the lake out back that need to be counted. My visions can wait but He will never come.

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Unfurling

The dust finally settles, and it's safe to come out.
Doors of fallout shelters creak open,
exhale recycled air and the smell
of confinement. The first step
cautiously out into the open.

Huddled masses stretch themselves into the halls
of new palaces: abandoned, themed McDonald's
massive stock exchange buildings bearing reliefs of
extinct flowers and grains
an ice skating rink, big enough
for children and horses.

Self-proclaimed kings and queens
spontaneously create new religions
and traditions, declare them in a competition of cacophony
through broken skyscraper windows
and flimsy observation decks
littered with the bodies of sparrows and pigeons.

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Thursday Afternoon

The anhinga spreads its wings open to shed the day's heat
looms like a bedraggled, cartoonish vampire bat
caught in the mid-afternoon sun. It flaps its greasy wings
and throws its head back, glares at the few people on the river bank
watching its inglorious preening.

Behind it, a tree is filled with more birds, shoulders hunched
feathers drooping in the heat. A snowy egret perches
in the topmost branches, its white feathers dazzling
in the bright sunlight. it spreads its wings as if in mock parody
of the bird directly below.

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By the Lake

Green lichen abstracts the north side of its trunk
Warming the snow enough in these early throes of spring
The willow branches lie on the surface of the ice
Fronds heavy with tiny, yellow buds, anticipating spring.

Denying every new snowfall obscuring the sunlight
The stirring of roots felt all the way up, through the ice
An empty patch of dead grass, bare earth encircles its trunk
Cataloging the warmth of the afternoon sunlight.