

Wilderness House Literary Review 20/4

Arvilla Fee

All He Has Left

If he tries to hand you bits and baubles—
an old fishing lure
a tie clasp he wore to your wedding
a little ruby ring (from a Russian oligarch),
the first penny minted in 1958
sheet music from Billy Joel,
fancy soaps he stole from a Vegas hotel—
just take them.

Don't question the back stories.

Nod politely, gratefully.

Among the teetering stacks of boxes and bags,
these are the only things he has left to give.

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Can't Argue with Crazy

she's spoiling for a fight
in her passive-aggressive way,
arms folded across her chest;
see her body, how it sways?

she just hit below the belt
a grin plastered on her face,
but you know her diagnosis,
so you're able to grant grace

it'd take decades to untangle
that trauma-battered mind,
can't call out bad behavior
when she thinks she's just fine

a poster-perfect narcissist
she'll cast all the blame on you
there's no logic in the madness
nothing you can do

my best advice is walk away;
you won't win in crazy land
it's like trying to use a sieve
to hold a million grains of sand.

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When Grownups Cry

she shrugged her backpack onto her shoulders
shifting books that felt like boulders

she kicked at weeds,
refused to believe
that wishes come from seeds

a trailer was her only home
as were all the dark unknowns

what would lie behind the door
Mom, needle-marked, upon the floor
face-down in flat, death-like snores

she'd make dinner once again
her frame pale and spindly thin

Mom would wake perhaps tomorrow
would weep apologies with sorrow
but there was nothing left to borrow

from the dry reserves
of a daughter's heart.