

Wilderness House Literary Review 20/4

Paul Rabinowitz

The Chicken Coop

looking out from the deck of a cafe
sipping a cappuccino with biscotti
brilliant silver light skims the pond
an egret wades as my thoughts stir

like a silent dance in gentle wind

an ambulance siren wails nearby
desperate to arrive at an old house
a big Victorian colored awnings
time is crucial maybe it's an overdose

a small hare traverses the meadow
between us hides under a thicket
I sip the sweetness of steamed milk
plotting the story arc of my next novel

call it a silent dance in gentle wind

about a woman in an old victorian
raising chickens for eggs and love
the opening line about silver light
touching the pond as an egret wades

sips her coffee on a rickety deck
hears a body thud on the wood floor
looks up a red-tailed hawk circling
the hare traverses the open meadow

a silent dance in gentle wind

as she steps over rotting plywood
purchased before his decline

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a promise to repair the old coop
she presses 911 in perfect cadence

the hawk dives into the broken coop
talons like needles enter its neck
like a silent dance the squad enters
as a gentle wind dances around her

she refuses to forget all he has done
remembers what he hasn't completed
grips the hammer and steadies the nail
screams with each blow to its head

the hare peeks out from the thicket
the egret returns to the silvery pond
opens the door to let the chicks roam
in a silent dance with gentle wind

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When All Else Fails

as the yellow moon peeks above the treeline
I remove my clothes to see if it still matters

your eyes shift from the hanging hydrangeas
to the old metal bench you painted aqua

I step closer you whisper in my ear
anticipation peaks when you ask me a favor

a sale on party lights at the garden center
if I can stop by on my way home from work

before I react you pull me close reveal a fantasy
I'm atop a ladder weaving wires 'round our patio umbrellas

you sway with the rhythmic tapping of the hammer
my fleshy skin rippling

pushing the posts into the wall socket
you open your eyes wide with excitement

like little fire works on a warm Fourth of July
we marvel at the festive celebration

you ask if I'd return to the garden center
purchase a Little Gem Magnolia

plant it at the gap between the fence
blocking the view of our neighbors

so when he removes his clothes
guides her supple body to the mattress

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we'll instead marvel at the ambience from our party lights
how big the little gem might grow over the years

as you hand me my clothes
uncork a perfectly aged Pinotage

clanging our glasses to The Little Eden Garden Center
another year of summer sales

A Poem In The Middle

Risk

I was asked to write a poem that fits on a page
one that lightly taps the reader on the shoulder
placed in the middle between a true love story
about finding a partner in the midst of grieving
and a speculative fiction work with gory details
about predation and the harsh ecosystem of the wild
my work doesn't need to knock anyone off their seat
it can be a simple segue from one piece to the other
maybe set in a desert following a hungry coyote
to emphasize how perceptive this sentient animal is
their capacity to feel emotions similar to humans
following its actions as it scampers over sandstone
a full moon floats between land and the celestial
casting shadows like a bridge to segue the night
the coyote stares at an incorrectly installed fence
leaning over and near total collapse raises one leg
and freezes as it sniffs the night air evaluates risk
learned through experiences and past interactions

Calculation

we both observe Ms Gottfried drying her hair
an east coast transplant who arrived last week
in the middle of the night during a dust storm
but unlike the intuitive mammal I'm overthinking
stuck on a twilight vision between coyote and dog
indistinguishable features when seen from a distance
at this hour when my body's chemistry accepts risk
I'll type through the night and cross over into morning
when the light breaks through illuminating new lines
as the coyote lowers his raised paw onto the earth
stealthily crosses the broken fence into the dark yard

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Reward

opening the door Ms Gottfried lets out her mini-poodle
Foofoo sniffs the backyard landing a perfect spot
calculating reward the coyote lifts his paw and freezes
waits for the door to close as Ms Gottfried withdraws
tightens her clawed hair clip sips a gin and tonic
waits for Foofoo to finish and press its nose to glass
a bridge to ease the loneliness of Ms Gottfried
she'll stroke its coiffed fur to bond with the animal
reduce her anxiety as she figures a way through
a sense of belonging in this wild place when suddenly
she feels a tap on her shoulder opens the clawed clip
her wild hair falls around the frowning face of a coyote
she guides him to her lap wipes his bloodstained mouth
strokes its bowed head blue-eyes gently closing