

Wilderness House Literary Review 21/1

Moss Man

Outliner

I was an empty outline
Drawn in chalk
Dry and impermanent
Easily blown away
like a candle holding harsh whispers
Unsettled powder at the mercy of a slight drizzle
Fragile against the ever-changing weather
of a world
in perpetual motion
A world in need of navigating

I was a young dimension
Drawn in graphite
Cross-hatched into form
New to height and depth
Adaptive to new environments
but still prone to vanish
under the pressure of social erasure
Treading carefully
but more flexible in the face of mistakes
Decisions still uncertain
as I held the knowledge of how easily
I could cover my tracks

I was a growing ink trail
Drawn to permanent spills
Memory written
in unforgettable black
Hesitant at the gates of real choice
Paralyzed at the thought of a single misstep
I wanted the self-assurance
of the unwavering
line

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I wanted my detail to be distinguished
and everlasting

I was a smudged color
Splattered with a spectrum
Phobic to primary perspective
yet unable to concoct
my own complexion
Fluctuating gradience
to match the shade
of my surroundings
Desperate
to mix myself
into magic

I was an immature lump of clay
Bulbous and unformed
Leaving smudges and smears
streaks and tracks
where I toppled
Unwise and in need of proper handling
Desperate to find the side of myself
that was upside down
Muffled pleas barely heard
from under a stifling cushion
of uncooperative
grey matter
A blind caravan
rolling
without wheels

I was a walking shape
drawing in breath
and careful where I stepped
Watching those with square heads

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fitting in with the right angles
Speaking of precision
in the language of divine geometry

Watching those with round faces
bouncing revelatory creations
from crown to color
and back again
Locking eyes with each other
in silent understanding

Watching those with pointed personalities
poke passersby
proudly
Some dug deep
to meet you in your comfort zone
Others kept their distance out of fear
and vanity

I tried to flatten my head
but couldn't think straight

I tried to trim my corners
but my punctures left me deflated

I tried sharpening my character
but cut myself
on my own spikes

So I shaved away my shapes
and let the heat of the sun
handle the rest
I was a silent puddle
Drawn in the scheme of cement
Reflective and warm

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Holding the mind's mirrored imagery within
my coastlines
Showing strangers how it felt
to step over themselves
Slowly shrinking
in the heat of high noon
Remembering myself
while a distant star
burned away any reason I used to have
for wanting to be anywhere
but where I was
Remembering
while collapsing
into myself
into a single and undeniable
atom of being
that I was
what I have always been
and what I will always
become

I was an empty outline

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Dirty Circus

Huffing and puffing
into this old flap of a balloon
Keeper of the pinprick
while this red-faced buffoon

blows
and spits
and tries
and quits

It all used to feel so inflated
held afloat by hot air speech
and a mind for the mania
Now it takes more
than the mild maintenance
of a pair of half-assed lung pumps
to get this funny rubber off the road
and animal-twisted into something resembling
a good boy

That's why the clown always brings the manual air-jack
His weathered airbags are well past capacity
Can't muster the gust
yet they yell,
"You must!"
Sorry, lungs are full today
One love
One lust

I just can't catch my fucking breath
And I can't find a patch for the prick
Constantly leaking my best intentions
Always waking up in a puddle of previous plans
Always losing progress like I forgot to press Save

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at the last checkpoint
Forever forgetting the skills I've acquired
along the way

No longer able
to hold in the hot air long enough
to rise above the dust and distraction
To squeeze the spout
where my breath slips out
and float above it all
until I'm nothing but a unidentified sprinkle
in the outskirts of Cloud City
learning a foreign tongue
and forgetting all about my life
down here
in this dirty circus

No
Now
I stare at a flat piece of rubber
unable to hold my weight
or even lift my toes off the tarmac
for a teasing handful of seconds
Now
I wait
in the blistering sun
hoping
that the heat alone will weld the hole
praying
that this space-bound holy scorcher
will burn the stale air from my lungs
and fill me instead
with a spirit
worthy
of the sk

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The Weight of Water

I just want an old towel on the sand
and a dog in the water

A head full of curls to my left
and proper living perspiring on my right

The simplicity of it all scares me
in the same way the Grand Canyon inspires both awe
and the deeply seeded pull
to take just one more step

Vortex for the valiant Don Quixote
Shape-shifting nightmare taking familiar form
Venus fly trap for the love-struck buzz boy
I smell your scents
taste your sweetness in the air

My mind fills with the red lights of history
Shading my memory with the novel and erotic
Distorting my judgement
with the promise of psychological nirvana

Big eyes and a shapely pout
Wondering why I haven't returned to bed
The things I dare say
sound like the ravings
of a street preacher

The apple pie smoke finger
tickled my nose
and led me into the endless woods
I've been fighting for my life
and desperate to get home

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I saw the back of your head in a dream
Outline of my insolence
Reminder
that waking up is hard to do
The mundane is a strain

You are a weighted blanket
So comfortable I could curl up and crystallize
So heavy I have a hard time
saying hello

You sailed above me
I shot you down
I've been looking for your landing site
just to say sorry
as I carry on my way

You knew I wanted to live by the tide
You saw suds in my eyes and a grasp of easy living
There is peace on the coast
Neighbor to the Void
The persistent static of crashing havoc
lulls my frantic mind to sleep

The sun can dissolve the rest of my red shell
A willing sacrifice to the source
Meanwhile

she is steep
Made up of winding paths and narrow getaways
Foliage abound
Fauna plugging every empty hole

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She has peaks to be strived for
Boulders bounded
Turn and take in the view she offers
from way up here

Acrylic destiny in every direction
Heaven in the form of uncharted forestry

She is the climb
The satisfaction of a well-deserved sweat
The promise of the peacefully chaotic
with veins of well-trodden dirt
running up and down
like varicose forks of safety
and survival

She is the first step of adventure
and the all-too-human notion
that you should scale something
simply because it is there

She is the reward for the effort
and to live on top of the world is worth
every ache and pain

The rolling tide asks nothing so grand
It offers no mortal epic or crowning crusade
It merely is

However featureless
it gives the sense of the eternal in a way unknown
by those with an eye for glory

When the stage is set

THE HOME STAR HOT

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When my old bones sink into the sand
and I am melded into my primordial elements
I pixelate
into the very grains
I lay upon

I want nothing more
than a dirty towel and a wet dog
A head full of curls and an easy drink
She wants what she is
Muddy boots and a treasure map
An eye for potential
and a spirit to seek the unknown

I feel the appeal
and I appreciate the aim
but the salt and static call to me
and you ask nothing so grand

You are the formless merge
She is merged with form

Because in the inexorable struggle
between land and sea
she is the mountain
and you
are the beach

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One Bubble

If I had a pebble
for each time you loved me,
could build
a castle to the stars.

If I had an atom
for each shred of longing,
I could play God
and create
our very own galaxy.

For every
'I love you'
I believed you.

And if you
were given a dollar
for each time
I returned your love,
you could buy
one piece of gum,
blow one bubble,

and it would pop.