

Wilderness House Literary Review 21/2

Nina Rubinstein Alonso
Feeling Wired

HEARING BITS OF DREAM MUSIC Rena wakes five a.m. feeling wired, gets up though it's early. Being solo hurts though friends try to be comforting, offer quasi-psychological advice, suggest tai chi, taking walks, say 'maybe meet someone new.' A year ago Dan drove to Montreal for a business meeting and died in a multiple car crash. He's not replaceable, no one is. Sometimes she hears his voice, a whisper asking her to keep his silver watch that stopped working. She loves him in whatever realm he may be, knows grief has no time frame, but doesn't want to waste being alive.

Her gray cat Abby stretches on the rug, offers comfort without complexity, presence without pressure. Rena's a cat person but briefly had a dog as she was walking in Boston's south end on a cold November day and saw a tiny whimpering puppy someone left on the sidewalk. Picked him up, checked his health with a vet, took him home. Her cat was curious, sniffed the newcomer, but her friend Juan wanted the puppy. The planet Jupiter was astrologically ascendent the day she found him so she'd been calling him Jupie. 'Perfecto' Juan said and took the pup home.

Rena takes a shower, dresses, makes tea and toast, drives to the university earlier than usual, glad the secretary's already in the office. Her administrative job currently involves finding a replacement for a history teacher who pushed limits in multiple directions, turned grades in late, sent politically skewed emails to staff, dated students. But what finally got him fired was submitting a paper for publication with content the department head identified as copied from another source, ie stolen. Rena sets up interview appointments, explains the position's adjunct but could become full time.

Spring vacation she's going to Spain where she and Dan spent one summer exploring Madrid, Toledo, Nerja, Barcelona. After comparing flight costs she chooses one, books the same hotel they stayed in on La Rambla as she wants to visit Sagrada Familia again, architect Gaudi's celebratory cathedral still under construction after a hundred years, recalls Gaudi was crossing Gran Via de les Corts Catalane on his way to confession at Sant Felip Neri Church when he was hit by a tram. He died and was buried in the crypt, but work continued. She sighs, takes out her credit card, pays the bill.