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Two Poems

by Phoebe Wilcox

The Mountain Wears Down

I.

Water rides over rock for millions of years. How long does it take for a waterfall to wear the stone heart of the mountain down?

II.

I misplaced my mind, a practical little purse rattling with brittle to-do lists. No one would have known what to do with it if they'd found it, like a gourd, a husk, an embroidered accessory, an elaborately concocted neural knick-knack stuffed with ideas about who I was supposed to be at that particular time of my life. Personality attributes like shopping errands, dreams reduced to coinage. The dreams had made change of themselves in order to pay the check. From a spiritual point of view they still had the same value but I was having a heck of a time trying to add it all up so that I didn't feel cheated. I was never good at math.

And then the nymph came
singing like a breeze,
singing to me that she
was the real dream,
the supreme dream,
and she gently bade me do her will.

Nymphs maintain themselves on blades of grass
and flower nectar.
When she took me away
—for a brief hiatus—
(That nymph who had eyes like dewdrops with the world reflected.)
When she took me away
and clothed me
in her mist and quartz
and made my mind, my body, my heart, my soul
mimic all the symptoms of love

as though it were real
as though elation was our destined place,
when she bent me, sweet and cajoling, to her will,
forced me to my knees
and up, and down, and up, and down, and up, and down
like her myth was tainted with Catholicism
and my mouth knew Eucharistic secrets
and until my knees were reddened with prayers and pornography,
well, I grew weak.
I hadn't eaten anything substantive for days and days,
nothing but sugar light sifted through trees,

or a rose bud here and there.

She forced me on the bus, gently as was her way,
her hand pushing at the small of my back, the rhomboid of Venus,
and with my eyes love-cloudy and my heart imprisoned,
well, the only thing I knew for sure
as I sat like a mist in my seat
was that I was all up for grabs.

I didn't know I was too ethereal to touch.

I stepped out of the bus into a snowy land of cold white feathers
And, as it turned out

I
hardly
knew

how my love would be made counterfeit and blood-stained.

Maybe Sometimes Never Only.

Did I leave it on a bus seat? No.

No, the bus was driven by an overweight, desperately lonely driver. He would have checked
the seats. No, it was the nymph, that sweet girl dancing on an eyelash of sky.
I left it with her. She's the one who coaxes the water over stone. She's the one
who dances in a flurry of May petals.

I squeezed his hand briefly, the bus driver's. I understood. There was snow everywhere,
piled on my heart.

I stepped out of the bus into a snowy land of cold feathers
And, as it turned out

I
hardly
knew

how heavy time was
or that I could carry it so far.

A More Significant Sun

I nestle beneath the covers, hands on your chest, and pray
that you keep me tethered.

There was a time when I dug my fingers into the mane of my pony,
ducked my face into its neck
and galloped, swiftly, recklessly into a dream,
jarring my teeth, jaws snapping together in the landing, the barely-made
leap over the silver rag of water
running turbulent between two worlds.
I came to that lovely land,
longingly, into dangerous blooms.
Now I want to stay with you where I am safe,

don't I?

Or...shall I go?

The pony stamps her hoof,
paws the dirt and snorts warm grassy breath.

We could leave

you calling for me from the other side.

I wouldn't hear you,

not with an aria of an angel's song luring me away.

Not with their hands leading me through the ferns, into the long-awaited,
seduction of blood-red bleeding hearts,

where I would stray that bright day with the sun

slipping its knife in

to open me like a letter sent secretly.

Let me correspond with a universe of pain and ecstasy there alone,

safe from those worldly things that kept coming and coming and coming
over me. An angel

will unburden me unwind my binding human clothing.

Dazed from the long journey,

I'd collapse into his white satin robe,

his bird-like wing against my cheek. Green moss,

a million microscopic hands pressing,

all of it draped in gauze light of a deeper, golder, more significant sun.

How does such a significant light shined by such a secondary sun shine?

It is a truer light than the sun I once knew?

Is this angel, this sun, all in sweet disguise? The sensation of elation, prodigal pleasure, body
arching in a state sublime...

Where am I, where am I, where is this, where am I?

From tremulous pink corollas and scepter-like capitula, I dined on nectar,

weak and drunk, rescued and drowning, pulsed into a psychic kiss,

sugar-light and fathoms-dark.

Where am I, where am I, where is this, where am I?

And the Mystery returns:

You have been set free. You have consummated your relationship with the night. You are
like the satin lining of the sky

turned on.

You can come.

You can go.

But you cannot coexist, heart-cleaved, in both places; you must live
in one place or the other. Gallop your little pony away...

and you will miss the sweet music, the sweet nectar, the sweet bloom
of new color, when you go.

You will miss it, yes you will, when you return

to your secondary joys and pains,

your diurnal ordinary,

your simple sunny kitchen

with its simple,

everyday sun.

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Phoebe Wilcox lives in eastern Pennsylvania. Her novel, *Angels Carry the Sun* is pending publication with Lilly Press, and an excerpt from a second novel, *Flower Symbolism for Dummies*, has been published in *Wild Violet*. Recent and forthcoming work may be found in *Sixers Review*, *Illumen*, *A cappella Zoo*, *Folly Magazine*, *The Chaffey Review*, *Calliope Nerve*, *The Battered Suitcase*, *Ginosko*, *Ascent Aspirations*, *Frostwriting*, *Gloom Cupboard* and many others. Her stories have twice been nominated for the Pushcart prize.
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