

Melissa A. Chappell

After Making Love the First Time in His Mountain Home

When it was over,
our breaths were long and deep,
the breeze strong enough to bend the birches,
filling up the hollows
where the bloodroot grows.

We were vines twining around
some old sycamore by the river,
not knowing
where one ended
and the other began.

I am a well, dug deep,
vines
climbing
stone,
and when we rose
with strength enough
to pull down Polaris,

the well flowed
over its sides
in thanksgiving,

its long emptiness being filled,
all of its unknowing being known.

Resting my head in the hollow
of his shoulder,
the wordless tides
pooled softly there.

And he knew it not.

The Girl with the Flaxen Hair¹
on bipolar disorder

I last saw her walking through
the rushes and tall grasses,
singing about the seasons,
the light fair on her flaxen hair
in the rustic afternoon.

I could never see
how the sands shifted
in her mind,
her surety washing away
with an encroaching wave,
only to return,
the sunlight singing
over the sea,
a song for her.

They say her mind
was broken;
some felt pity,
some felt empathy,
others cared little..

I knew her when
she used to sing
with the thunder
as it tumbled down
the sky.

I knew her when
she used to curl
like a frightened doe
beneath the thicket
by the stream.

I knew her in the
in-between times,
and I could not see
the shadows as she

sat among the
blossoming things—
the shadows,
shifting like the sands.

For a time I thought
she had gone somewhere,
perhaps slipped this world
when the melody to her song
had unraveled,
as might one of her braids.

Yet lately I heard
she was still wandering
the rushes in the burnished afternoon.

That she fishes in the streams
and has her fill of wild blueberries.

That sometimes she sleeps alone,
and sometimes she doesn't.

And it is alright with her
if he is gone before morning.

She knows now
that the shadows are there
because of the light,

and the light is there
because with each
passing night,
the Sun will always
make his way around to her,
again and again.

I last saw her walking through
the rushes and tall grasses,
singing about the seasons,
the light fair on her flaxen hair
in the rustic afternoon.

Mammal Dreams

Night was slipping
through the crack
in my window
when he came.

We spoke of little,
except a brief recounting
of the news of the day.

A simple meal,
just enough.

He washed the dishes,
soap up to his elbows—
*Careful with that plate,
my mother gave it to me.*

I dried with a threadbare towel.

In his arms,
we spoke of little.
Gentle was the darkness,
circling me around,
need rising,
the green fuse
breaking forth--
shattering
death into life--
Yes
to the flowering earth.
Yes
to alabaster streets.
Yes
to a child with a red kite, soaring.
Yes.
Yes.

We slept.
Warm.

Curled,
as if an
old fisherman's knot,
to be cast into the sea.

We spoke,
one to the other:
Yes,
if only in dreams.