

4 Poems by Bill Wolak

Things in the Cellar

I'm throwing them out;
the difficult things untouched for so long:
armchairs no one sat in for thirty years;
childhood dressers stuffed with copper pipes,
amber wallpaper, moth-eaten flags, croquet balls,
and photographs of my dead sister's boyfriends.
Out, I'm throwing them out—
along with everything else I couldn't save:
the chifforobe crammed with my grandmother's buttons,
mildewed doilies hand-knitted by my mother,
yellowed chintz kitchen curtains,
my father's rusty straight razor,
and a hand-mirror reflecting only dust.
I'm throwing them all out;
even the steamer trunks packed with neatly folded skirts
and suitcases full of useless uniforms
still stinking of mothballs.
I'm throwing them out.
For some things, no new hands appear.

It's Dangerous Not to Love

I describe you to explain myself;
you are the context for my possibilities;
so my words belong to you because in the end
it's dangerous not to love.
And you emerge from me
not as a photograph entrusting
its single memory to paper,
but as an ear's reminder
of what the eye can never reach.
Two directions; one crossroad.
I: a rainmaker conjugating absences.
You: a dance floor to make time new.
I always approaching you,

finding your nakedness everywhere,
in the questioning spark of the blind man's eye,
in the sunlight warming gravestones,
in the embrace of an icebound harbor.
Always, I lick the thirst from your mirage.
Sometimes I disappear where you touch me;
sometimes the well of your body absorbs me
as I touch bottom.
Still, I explain you to describe myself.

You: the dream talking in many voices at once.
I: the sudden detachment of a wish expressed.

Deep into the Erasures of Night

Other hands will touch this warmth
where nothing is deeper than willing flesh.
Your kiss, open as water, dissolves into mine
and somehow secret maps
are exchanged in our nakedness.
Now loving makes a ladder
out of flesh and its scars,
and we climb deep into the erasures of night.
Other hands will touch this warmth
when before surrendering to sleep
a caress still stalks beyond exhaustion
the enticing pinks in which rain
sleeps after lovemaking.

The Keeper of Strangeness

I am the light's fever in honey.
I am the lullaby heard in a nightmare.
In black-eyed alleys
and along tide calloused wharves,
I am the room where you find what you're missing.
I am the dial tone flesh of frightening energy transfers.
I am the expectant hands hovering over nakedness

and the insomnia of sperm.

My lap is a toolshed reaching dreamward.

I am the scarecrow made of birds.

I am the inexhaustible memory of salt.

Out of anger, I created the wind's solitude;
out of love, the restlessness of the rain's long inhalations.

I am the scream's only bridegroom.