

AN OZARK YEAR
OF POEMS
by Sara Firman

Dec. 2009



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JANUARY

Lilith

From the dark and dankness
Out of the depths of no-time
Came Lilith, and said:

"In the deep dampness
At the feet of trees
Grows my soul ~
Moss green and flowing

Out of death and decay
In the slowness of winter
Grows my heart ~
Bloodroot cloaked in stillness

Beneath the shallow murkiness
Fed by constant seeps
Grows my strength ~
Arrowhead vibrantly spreading

Along hidden shaded banks
Sheltered and fertile
Grows my nourishment ~
Nettle sharp and cleansing."

Through the shadow of dreams
Carrying my longing
I heard her, and went.



FEBRUARY

February morning (6.30 am)

Birdfeeder hanging
like Japanese temple
on white mountain
Snow after midnight
the most silent
Middle chimes
making harmony
Everything settled white
blankets you can sink into
A bird drifts
red-cloaked monk
moving in the air
like a prayer
around the temple
Trees have turned
lacquer dark
so many brush strokes
on perfect parchment
Light seeps down
soaking the dawn
Saturated
Peace



MARCH

Good Friday

cook life in sun juice
over white hot rocks
crush sweet honey light
raw and smeared
with spring egg lather
incubate for days
then watch it run
through summer rain
delirious petal-faced
wind at play spraying
water like emeralds
into the shadow region



APRIL

To the River

up there in the light
on chimney rock
a vulture as old as the Ozarks
spreads his wings like prayers

He's drawn back an ancient bow
shot us each a new dream
given a stolen morning
meaning

The black boat slides
through the river's gullet
like guinness down the throats
of my companions

It's enough to boast that
both my grandmothers swore
by its nutrition
while I am drunk on this

Drunk on river bliss
already feeling the joy well
up from somewhere cut
deep into karst rock

Shadows cast by trees
or clouds dance in my eyes
no longer peering down
I'm scanning the bluffs

For flowers that the men
don't see but I don't mind
and keep gasping at
floods of blue, blue bells

Splashes of spring seeps
sounding like bells of light
all light and layers
slipping between

Uncountable greens
and I lean into the rise and fall
forgetting that anything
was ever lost

Bouncing off rocks
my heart is a fire pink in bloom
and I'm charmed
by these brothers-in-arms

Basking winking turtles
who plop off logs
and paddle away
while I wave

To the river of dreams.



MAY

Heartwood

After the forest fell
to the wild and sudden winds.

After the Grandmother
- the oak who strengthened our visions -
fell to her knees,
all her children around her,
silent
as the angel
I once saw in her
skyward branches ~

What sacrifice is best made?

Could we imagine
something different than a return to order?

In the days that followed this chaos
my heart
was broken open,
like the heartwood of trees.

Hieroglyphics appeared
on hewn surfaces
and tears
oozed.

Kind giants thrown down
in tangled protective mounds,
they did
not harm us.

This astonished me.

We labored twenty days
- one for each minute of the maelstrom.

Threw ourselves into the arms
of dying branches and leaves,
thick with spring pollens.

Rain-soaked, new leaves
and shallow sodden roots, had
absorbed the violent words
of wind and change
- had brought it all down to earth,
as we were brought down.

Without hidden power, and
cut off
from our addictions,
we stepped into the Now.

Exhilarated by a *greater* power.

I built pyres that burned high,
even in deluges of rain.

I stacked grand pyramids of logs,
enough for three winters.

(Deeper in the forest
the elders will be left to rest and return
their elixirs
to the soil of soul,
sleeping.)

By the time the heat came,
a new landscape
was emerging
- inside and out -
from the fire of our spirits.

Small frogs greeted me,
as if foretelling
unanticipated abundance.

Wind sang through the chimes.

Perhaps the sacrifices will not be as harsh
as we fear.

Already the mushrooms and microbes are weaving tales.

JUNE

Sudden delight

Sudden delight:

*As when a black shadow
right-angles my oblivious path
blurts into that steadfast daze
and becomes a cat flirt
for no obvious reason.*

Sudden delight:

*As when a cutglass remark
shifts perspective and gasps
with a thousand rainbows
over a thing not lost
on a shared experience.*

Sudden delight:

*As when a green glistening
turns into a forest beetle
ornamented purple and bronze
whose life has ended
but remains as a jewel.*



JULY

The Bobcat and the Peony

An imprint flashed
its thoughts of light
between leaves of trees
and there
she was.

The long slope
of body intent
lithe with stealth
and yet
she paused.

In flank view
faced my gaze
and held
held me
in her health.

No fear in that
twitched ear.

I would have been
crushed
but for the unexpected
tameness
of a peony.

Innocent in white
and more light.



AUGUST

Baking in August

Short memories
motes of sunlight
dashed out words
before breakfast
fizz like hummingbirds
high on sugar water
caffeine in my blood
banana bread in the oven
a morning cool enough
for baking dreams.



SEPTEMBER

Viriditas

That gleam on green
whose swift pause
is a glimpsed mood
half-hidden at the edge
of a foliated dream
sending its soft mewl
a rippled renaissance
through furred leaf
whiskered and burred
is the verdant one
sleek feral queen
masked in oak

Quick pan, ripe puck
track this brightening
of the imaginal realm
teach this aspirant
of feline stealth
claw-sharp ways
to blur the physical
outline of her face
merge with you now
in green wood deep
moon blanched love
wild and forever



OCTOBER

Leaf fall

As if you matter
any more than this leaf
floating down from some high branch
catching an uplift and then drift
but inexorably downward
in a long, slow sweep
even so, graceful
to land among many
layer upon layer of leaves
so that after a while
I can't see where you landed
and your fear of being
singled out for anything
right or wrong
is laid to rest.



NOVEMBER

Battle at wounded tree

In mute distress,
did the forest lay for me
it's bait of wild persimmons:
wrinkled, puckered in sweetness
after the first frost?

Not like the frost of false words
curled dry and inflammatory
as leaves, and leaving
an uncured after-taste
on my lips.

He lied. Instinctively
I set my own trap
like a huntress, like Artemis:
offered a little sweetness
before the fall.

If the backs of his hands
were skinned
or his face made raw
like the trees' hurt hides
Would he feel their pain?

Would he want to stand them up
after they had fallen?
Is taking their hearts,
their stalwart strength,
any kind of victory?

Ride away on your metallic steed
while I gather the fruit
that falls into my hands
so that we can eat cake
and plant seeds.

Mourn the fallen,
the gentle warriors,
who left us unharmed;
pay homage now,
do not reap or rape.

DECEMBER

raspberry pink stains
the snow where small birds have been
feasting not fighting



~ End ~

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by Sara Firman
with love and thanks to Joe Landwehr

Dec. 2009

