

Poems

Sharon White



Spring Migration (Near Emma Ricklund's Summer House)

Surprised by farms, piles of birchwood and pine on the bus north
black rivers cut woods swollen with snowmelt and rain, the narrow
sticky leaves of birches, a boy holding a bag of cookies,
butter staining brown paper, cap pulled low over his eyes
matted yellow grasses, red
(wooden)
houses silent yards moving in permanent twilight north, reindeer running along the
train
small, white and brown in a cluster
(and the animal who'll kill a reindeer
even if it's not hungry)

a boy with a reindeer dog,
"she's young, a bit unsteady," he says, "my first dog, I'm not
sure she'll be good"

in Saxnas, spring snow (corn), frozen hard enough to walk on
heather, bayberry, green furry haze of poppies, tiny yellow bells
on the lake, little bird with dark head, white breast
at the store I meet a man who says he doesn't like sweets
in the hospital (with cancer) they gave him sweet things for
breakfast

"I'm back now," he tells me
3 large reindeer on the slope below the house
fuzzy brown horns, cream and
brown coats
take off down the road, heads held high, loping away
hollow hair, like string, white, stiff, tough

a boy getting a ride with us to the church village says, "my mother broke with my
father and she married Jorgen, very nice here, the people trees birds
Have you been to Hollywood? Is it crowded?
(The key to the church heavy, brown, rough in the palm of my hand)

reindeer come through the place where the mountain

rests like a boat on the ground
people lumbered here to get to America (or Saxnas) huddled
under scratchy branches their first year
(black bears eat the reindeer calves)

everything's ready to burst
buds, slim shoots, purple weeds, fat leaves crawling
ancient lichen gray-green swallowing sun on chunks of rocks

I walk out to an island
reindeer tracks in the snow
time exploded (a star), all gathered—layered waiting
(Emma's husband Folke had a child with a nurse and then left her and then
had another child

Lisa's lover had four more children with four other women, she lived alone in a little red
house Folke built her—)

Emma had a garden (orange poppies)—a sparkly quilt for their bed—but (when
they
divorced) she slept in a little room on the third floor a round window looking out
at lake and mountains

(in a narrow bed)
roar of snowmelt in all the streams & rivers & rivulets & trickles—bathed in sunlight—
echoes

the twitter/chatter of birds—(and now a truck)
(& now a carpenter bee)

What Do You Do?

Slice the trees into pieces
 Pile their twiggy fingers near the shed
Measure stones for a path
 Straight and narrow to the
Tiny red house
 Listen to the wind, dismiss it
Rake the grass already blushing
 new green
Build two tiny outhouses
 Stained with wind
Wish I lived somewhere else
 By a warm sea
Dark nights
 Beautiful women who'd talk to me
With their eyes
 my arm
Held mute by my side
 As the wind pulls up the
Tips of my hair
 Wear my boots when it's wet,
Moss sinks under
 The shiny water
Polish the feet of the trees
 All night that's no night
But the burning eye of spring

If There's a Dish There's a Woman

washing the dish,
 sprinkled with flowers
a towel in her hands as she dries
 the dish

if there's a bed there's a woman
 making the bed—solitary—shaking the
coverlet out

 like snow on the mountains

if there's a floor there's a girl
 mopping, mopping—
wiping her brow with her narrow hand
 her skirt moving like water along the floor

if there's a clothesline
 there's a mother, wrapping her
hands around the wet legs of her
 son's jeans, the sodden torso of his
 shirt
windy—all dry soon

a sink filled with water and
 yes, a woman dipping her hands into the
suds, bringing pots up one by
 one like treasure,
until they gleam copper

the sun's high
 there's no night
reindeer calve
 on frozen slopes

Sun blazes through curtains
 like a fiery knife until she opens the window
and welcomes the air
 soft, cool

if there's a chimney, smoke hoots its way
 curled like lichen

the smell
 keeping her company as she
sits by the hearth