

Losing Duende by Alicia Hoffman

An Ink Publications Broadside

"Intelligence is often the enemy of poetry, because
It limits too much, and it elevates the poet to a
sharp-edged throne where he forgets that ants could
eat him or that a great arsenic lobster could fall
suddenly on his head." – Federico Garcia Lorca

Losing Duende

In this yellow photo, your eyes are the fires of late June
as you watch from your soft throne of Pennsylvania

creek bed, as your bare and muddied feet sink
beneath a plantation of sand and grit, as cool water

runs between your sandcastle toes, indistinguishable
from the shadows, the minnow silhouettes and rivulets

streaming through wet stone. You were so young, firm
and curved and free to ponder nonsensical ideas as silly

as the syllables in tomorrow, the riddle between fishes
and fish. From this, who could tell you could grow old

and sink into stillness. Here, it's as if you could forever flit
about the palette of earth and branch, a gypsy laugh

at the ants and the worms and the entire world
as if they would always be there for the taking. Even myths

of a silver creature lurking in the depths of that small town
stream were real to you as unicorn, light-winged fairy

sprinkling glitter from a magic wand. But now, the sun
has dissolved. Now, the rains come early and stayed

too long. And now, it aches in places in your body
you cannot bear to name, and you are lost, it has gone

away and you have called off the searches,
you have closed the blinds, you have taken the clippings

of old papers and placed them between the lines
of your dresser drawers, and I dare you here, instead

of this image of you in younger years, because
I know inside you will still find that same flamenco dance.

Gulf Island National Seashore

This is where I leave,
where Fort Pickens turns

alabaster, long drives
towards New Orleans

become smoke and
mirror memories

of the Rue de Canal
trolley ride towards

the center of somewhere
we could get drunk

on mint juleps in a square
flowering with bougainvillea –

Yes, we are definitely
past Fort Pickens

when the road turns
and there is a toll

and no one around and
I say screw the change

until you are convinced
you can keep on, go

until the ground
is not ground

but white sand and
the hush of distant shore.

Yes – we are somewhere
between Mississippi

and Florida when
the Gulf Coast swallows

the night sky, so dark
we carry a flashlight

to the nearest rush
of water only to find

it is littered
with sea crabs, comic

in their sideways scurry,
the translucence

of shrimp, weird
lobsters wagging crustacean

tails and I would say
be careful, they are arsenic,

but you would not
get the joke, and

this is when I know
I will stay here, where

North American shore
meets the Gulf of Mexico,

where home
is an island

of sand and brush –
spikes and burrs

stick to my socks
and blue Gulf

can rise and fall
against the shift

and sway and beyond
the ragged shoreline

I linger to swim
and dive and the water

is still and warm and
you are not invited.

Still

Look at the sky's moon, that
punch white dot in inky fabric.

And there, in the bright black distance,
a star, an old one, burning. And there,

a bluish one, flying. I wish for a lot of things
these days, but most days I never stop stitching

those wishes together, one after another,
a jack's ladder, a beanstalk, a wide green field.

Bridges, fences, walls. And this is fine. This climbing
past, this unknowable future. Forget all of that.

But give me this.

Allow the dew to rise onto the beads of the lawn
plot grass each morning, for the pachysandra
to slowly row their ivy leaves. As for the saccharine,
allow the honey, the thick sweet butter, the dramatic
tragedy of sky, the breathing over there, and here, still.

Author Bio

Alicia Hoffman lives, writes and teaches in Rochester, New York. She has taken an interest in reading and writing from the moment she learned to remember. Recent poems can be found in online and print journals such as *Oak Bend Review*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Redactions*, *elimae*, *Umbrella*, *Writer's Bloc*, *Red Wheelbarrow*, *decomp* and elsewhere. This is her second broadside with Ink Publications.

Artist Bio

Jill Hoffman grew up in the Finger Lakes area and is a working artist in Ithaca, NY. She graduated from The Rochester Institute of Technology with a degree in Illustration with honors. Her artwork has won awards on national levels as well as regional in the Central New York area. Samples of her work can be found at <http://www.etsy.com/shop/TheDreamwood>

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