

Three Poems

by Olive Sullivan

Everyday Mermaids

We wade hip high
through wild carrot, thick as foam,
in the center of the vanished Niobrara Sea,
a place where prehistoric monsters swam.
Now the dog leaps like a fish over waves of green.
Blackbirds skim the seedheads like gulls.
A curious bison calf,
still in its first pumpkin-colored coat,
noses a seashell, ridged and whorled
and white as bone,
fossil remnant of the ancient sea.
At the dollar store in town,
a little girl wears a tiara made in China,
her blonde hair fluorescing green in the artificial light.
She twirls and laughs
as her mother chooses a shell-shaped soap dish.
In this small town,
an island in an ocean of grass,
we're all dancing on the bottom of the long-gone sea.
From the center of the Flint Hills

we can see forever, and
forever is grass rippling in the endless south wind.

Bless This House

Plant a lilac by the front porch to remember Grandma Helen,
who always liked the fragrance when she pegged out the wash.
There's no clothesline at this new house, just a high-tech LG dryer
with digital controls, complicated and expensive,
but it takes forever to dry and the clothes smell like
chemical esters, not like lilacs.

Plant iris too, the big tall ones that look like fairy castles.
Her favorites were the dark purple ones in midnight velvet.
The new house has professional landscaping,
serried ranks of hostas and small junipers
that will someday take over the porch and crack the foundation,
Japanese maples flamboyant in their burgundy silk fringe.

Plant some tulips for color in the spring.

On a night with a full moon, creep back to the old homestead
and dig up the wild honeysuckle.

Plant it by your back porch, even though your dad says he's allergic.
When your Wiccan friend brings a bundle of sage by
to smudge out unfamiliar spirits, stop her.

Hold up your hand, the one wearing Grandma's opal ring.

Say, "No. Wait."

Grab Grandma's flowered shawl.

Run out into the yard and gather arms full of honeysuckle and lilac.

Fill the whole house with their essence.

Welcome the spirits in.

Pin Oak

The world is turning shades of blue,

a wall of clouds moving in from the west

to meet the darkening sky behind us.

Pin Oak Lake lies still, waiting,

a palette for the sky to fill.

Two hawks rise up, their cries

eerie in the winter dusk,

their feathers striking the last notes of gold

from the setting sun. They

wheel and circle, a dance of rage

or love or something in between —

We cannot tell. It does not matter.

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In addition to writing, **Olive L. Sullivan** performs in the band Amanita, and in her free time, likes to fly-fish with her husband, the scholar and writer Stephen Harmon; take long walks with dogs; and travel anywhere that requires a passport. She is an apprentice bookbinder.