

## THE WIDLING

Men called him cougar, mountain lion, puma,  
sometimes painter, but he had no need for a name.  
"Spirit of the canyons" some tribes proclaimed him,  
secret as a Cheyenne shaman, going and coming  
from nowhere like a dust devil, just as loose and fierce.  
He watched his world through smoky topaz; old arcane fire  
embered in the jewels studding quiet gold.

Down from the rimrocks he came, a warm shadow,  
moving the same way lava once flowed, remembering  
the black obsidian that cut his footpad when he caught  
his first vole— barely a chink for the huge hunger-hole  
he carried after his mother drove him out of what he knew  
as home— a bark-scented cliff-hollow,  
creviced with juniper roots, screened  
with a twisted fallen trunk and summer acacia shoots.  
He and his sister cut teeth and claws on the wood skeleton,  
shed their spots in its shade, mastered balance  
on its angles and grade. For awhile his life  
was a tangle of mother's dark tail-tip and hind legs,  
laced with branches and small cones. From a special limb  
he could glimpse the up-slant of mountains vignetted  
with indigo, purple and olive. Still in sight of his tree

(cont.)

Robert W. Holloway

not latest  
but close if  
double-space needed  
in a hurry

he watched a white sego lily grow tall as his ears  
until his compulsion to taste it, found how porcupine grass  
tests an inquiring nose, made toys of crickets, learned  
the evil noise of a diamondback, saw it strike  
his sister. He forgot nothing of his twenty month total,  
not even a loggerhead shrike that stored its catch  
on lofty pinyon twigs as he stared, all heartbeat and tongue,  
mad to be face-level with each winged beak-loaded arrival.  
He had quivered with envy and pleasure whenever  
his quick mother stole the impaled rodents for him.

Now he was as much fur-sheathed power as she. But new,  
unpracticed in the ways of jackrabbits and solitude,  
surrounded by drought. His gauntlet was sanded playa,  
scorched arroyo, a rancher's buckshot. Shimmering brightness  
closed down his eyes, hummed along his nerves, dinned inside  
his head like wind. Harried by his belly he passed cholla  
and color-comets of ocotillo, hurried by scent-claims  
of his kind telling him "Move on, these miles are mine!"

Whatever he touched cracked or broke loudly  
in a ring of chaparral; there was no safe bed.  
His nostrils began to sting, his tongue  
was tainted with an unknown. His topaz burned  
from an outside source. Ahead he could hear  
scrub oak and manzanita seethe and whistle in flames.  
He zigzagged flaring brush and blowing ash; to his left  
a stone exploded, pelting his rump with shrapnel.  
The dense dark ceiling became a sudden sieve  
letting an overhead river fall. He had never seen such rain.

(cont.)

He had never seen fire at all.

A smoke-blinded quail darted toward him;  
he borrowed time from fear to eat.

Four more days a migrant, hurting-tired,  
prodded by noon-heated odors, moonflash of alien eyes.

He liked the wispy sweetness of sage, the lowered stars,  
scurrying skinks patterning the transient surface.

He caught a white-footed rat. It wasn't enough.

He entered piney half-light, became a half-tone crouch  
over conifer needles and centipedes, past mariposa yellow  
and jabbering jays that couldn't keep a secret. A coyote  
tucked behind buckbrush saw the ancient rite of passage,  
understood a role was being filled, having early done the same,  
knowing too, something would be spilled but never wasted.

All the hungry muscle meshed in ritual rhythm, arched,  
elongated, aimed by what his mother traced on his brain  
for that moment. The mule deer felt nothing;  
shock was swifter than fangs, a rule long perfected.

He was whole at last, auditions over, the part his.

The nameless cat paused to look at his stage—widening  
toward metamorphic rock columns and strange shapes.

He climbed outcropped agate streaked with blue,  
russet and mauve to match the western sky. He sat  
like bronze on a carved plinth watching twilight rise  
from the low waiting places, content to know his niche.

High desert felt his triumphant scream; yucca, cloud, beetle,  
the tentative stream struggling beyond the straggling trees,  
everything that vibrated with his sound was his.

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Glenna Holloway  
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DEATH: A STARRING ROLE IN THE CELESTIAL SCENARIO

But "death" is just a word we mortals use,  
other entities don't regard the same.  
Time rolls away; form changes to diffuse  
each atom, turns around to swap its name.  
No thing is new— man, beast, design or town.  
All deeds are old before the doer thinks them.  
Frontiers still beckon, (ours are up and down)  
but charts may fail before the printer inks them.  
Matter returns to the elemental wheel;  
man must do the same, for nothing's wasted.  
Energy winds up on the cosmic reel  
as basic thread for stars being basted.  
Beginnings are endings of some other phase;  
endings are pauses while new portieres raise.

## CUCKOLD AND KING

Uriah swore his valiant sword to Israel:  
 A Hittite, he strove to prove allegiance  
 To Zion's holy cause. And many heathens fell  
 Before his might who seldom lived to tell  
 The prowess of Uriah.

As Joab's hand-picked battle-wisest veteran,  
 Uriah thought himself a lucky man.  
 Born poor, his soldiering provided much  
 Of comfort's touch—soft linen, wine and meat, a house  
 Well shaded by the king's for his new spouse,  
 That strange shy girl he wed.

His mind was peaceful knowing his wife was sheltered  
 By more than tent flaps protecting her bed.  
 But the campaign for Rabbah was going less well  
 Than spoiling Ammonites had gone. The king  
 Was needed at the front to lead his troops, to sing  
 And play his songs of inspiration to them.  
 Yet David idled in Jerusalem.

Israel was stymied outside Rabbah's wall.  
 The king sent forth a summons for Uriah  
 Who hastened to his lord, devoted to his call.  
 After his report, David gave him leave,  
 Aimed him toward pleasure, primed him well with meat.  
 But the guilty plot was wasted on the Hittite  
 Who joined the kitchen servants for the night  
 Beside the king's back door.

When David heard, he tried again to replant  
 The vineyard with the owner's proper seed. Once more  
 Uriah failed to cover up the deed. "I can't  
 Indulge my flesh while my comrades suffer  
 In the fields," he cried, suppressing all his longings  
 For Bathsheba. But the wintry will of kings  
 Is seldom denied. David called for seal and quill.  
 Exquisite feel for punishment and irony  
 Went in the message to Joab.

Musician's hands with newly learned regality  
 Put planned execution in the executed's hands.  
 David watched him go: Uriah had his chance.  
 He could have kept it all, but no, he chose  
 A principle. So be it. Every soldier knows  
 The battle's risks. The army must advance;  
 Every obstacle to Israel must fall.  
 Every soldier makes the most of all his weapons.  
 David sighed. Lately he wearied of war.  
 Soon...a wedding to prepare for.

## CALENDAR FOR THE WETLANDS

Stilled water, loosen  
the young doe's thin reflection  
from winter's mirror.

Faint green, raise your shade  
to deepening warmth, lengthen  
your reach for the sun.

Creeks, draw guiding lines,  
mark silver trails through valleys  
for summer's passage.

Rivers, borrow gold,  
squander the rich metaphor,  
bank the fallen change.

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MIXED MEDIA

Glenna Holloway

You used bad materials to start with—all  
the wrong components. This soft flimsy stuff  
won't hold up no matter whose brand.

There should be building inspectors for such things,  
an edict declaring them purely esthetic, utterly  
nonfunctional. Fireproof.

I never dreamed there was activity up in that little back room  
or that you were creating something in the closed dark.  
Once, I opened the door by mistake and thought it a closet  
where you kept old outgrown loves  
on their way to the Good Will bin.

We had so much in the other rooms  
there was no time or reason to wonder  
what was happening up there.

Then suddenly it was hard-finished,  
glazed with gold and set with jewels.  
And you, raging, dragged it out for confrontation,  
warped and crazing, collapsing on its base.

An idol made of used flesh and blood  
can never support the weight of adorning worship.  
It only can in death.

August

222

### SELF CARVED EPITAPH

When I was twenty I believed John Donne:

"No man is an island entire of itself..."

But he was wrong. I wept— and the mass pool  
failed to rise. I bled— it didn't redden  
one grain of my neighbor's beach.

I grew up, became a total island.

My play had one brief role. My song  
was just a single perfect note.

And no man's death can diminish me  
because I am not involved in gross mankind.

Soundproof fog surrounds me, secession  
is secure. No one ever probes.

Why, Preacher, would I send to know a thing?

My house is built of sand and furnished  
with restful dark. I polarized the currents  
and tides of my sea away from my placid thighs.

And here I sink and die  
certain that no bell tolls and never will.

None knows.

It makes a nice refrain, a clang:

None knows, none knows, none knows.

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UNTITLED

Glenna Holloway

When I was twenty, I believed John Donne:  
"No man is an island entire of itself..."  
But he was wrong. I wept— the mass pool failed  
To rise. I bled— it didn't redden  
One small grain of neighbors' beaches. I grew up!

I shrank down. Became a total island.  
Wrote a play with one brief role.  
My song is just a single perfect note.  
And no man's death can now diminish me  
Because I'm not involved in gross mankind.  
Soundproof fog surrounds my guarded ears,  
Secession is secure. No one probes.

Why, preacher, would I send to know a thing?  
I rubbed my eyes with night and polarized  
The currents and tides of my sea away  
From these my placid thighs. And here I sink  
And die. And no bell tolls. Or ever will.  
None knows.

Repeat: none knows, none knows, none knows

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## WHAT HAPPENED TO MY CROWN?

It was always there before,  
reaching up to hold light and warmth,  
giving me height, splashing confetti sparks  
on everything. I was so used to the feel,  
the perfect fit, the tilt...

Don't you remember  
in the center was a crest,  
a heraldic unicorn rampant, crusted  
with rubies? My fingers store the memory  
of free-form pearls and cool jade.  
Your wide pupils reflected sapphires,  
other gazing eyes relayed its legends  
into mine. Or was it envy?

It must have slipped off  
while I was forgetting something.  
All the paths it opened in the crowd,  
the doors... Always manipulating the dark,  
keeping the years kneeling...  
Now suddenly time is rampant,  
no dancing lights refract through my shadows.  
My head feels weightless  
and cold.

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Third Place

Three migrating cranes  
brush moon's page with wingéd lines—  
an ancient haiku

I agree!  
Golds

Note from Judge: Even though 2nd line has only 6 syllables, this haiku is so beautiful in its imagery I chose it as a winner.  
J. Hale.

2nd Place

Glenn Holloway

## THE AMULET, AN UNIDENTIFIED JEWEL

It could have touched Cleopatra's attared skin,  
a scarab cabochon in beaten gold. Once  
we thought we saw the pigeon's blood that is ruby  
when prongs of light probed its domed catacombs.  
Moonlight made it queens' opal; beside the sea  
it was Ho's lost jade, and on the mountain top  
a star sapphire for Sappho. Never diamond,  
no none of these.

What stronger, stranger radiance happened  
in the center of ancient forces  
creating corundum and purest carbon?  
What fierce source, spectral power unsuspected?  
Deep in refraction's core, in wicks of the atoms,  
the home of something— named Faith or maybe  
Hope— Perhaps destined to be worn unknown  
while shining aside known darkness.