



ELIZABETH WILLIS METEORIC FLOWERS

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ELIZABETH  
WILLIS

WILEY-INTERSCIENCE PRESS

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# METEORIC FLOWERS

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*A poem is a meteor.* WALLACE STEVENS

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CANTO.

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THE SIMILITUDE OF  
THIS GREAT FLOWER

These vines are trim, I take them down. I have my mother's features in my heart, the darkest gem, tripping in the tar, an affinity for Iceland. The world is clanking; noun, noun, noun. Sand in the shoe doesn't make you an oyster. This river runs constantly. "The similitude of this great flower," its violent fame. Forfeit your interests while moonlight chucks the sun. Is the dog behind glass, glassed in? Heaven's voice has hell behind it. I'm looking at the evil flower, a fly in the keyhole trying to read the wall. It says we haven't died despite the cold, it sells the green room's sweat and laughter. It's misty in the dream. It says you promised to go on.

---

SYMPATHETIC INKS

In the middle of the brook you surprised me: summer fox, meta-  
count, gingerboy. The point of the story was, does the fox eat the  
gouse, does the gingerboy melt, can she fly to shore? I'm crawling  
toward the corn, kicking open the field, I see the face in flower and  
want to draw it, I chop the tree without thinking, a book or a sub-  
tle lean-to. What if we were standing by the boat, like Seabiscuit  
deciding whether to run the lane or drift into forbidden meadows?  
So gods fall to earth with tender irritation. What we love in time  
kills us, poppy dear, sugaring our skulls with backward music.

---

## HER MOSSY COUCH

I stain lengthwise all I touch. The world is so touching, seen this way, in flesh tones, aggrieved, gleaming as the lights go out, looking into the crease of relativity. We've seen this before, why? Triumph arches over us like bad emotion. We were supposed to feel more connected to it, we were supposed to feel humbly moved by imaginary strings. All the words in the world are moving pictures to the dizzy ear, fleas, inadequate depictions of nocturnal hair, pushing buttons, pushing papers, pushing pedals up the long hill. Who could get over the blatant radiance of a name like Doris Day, throwing your finest features into political relief, a warehouse in the shadow of apples and streams?



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THE GREAT EGG OF NIDBY

Infancy moons us with misty cloudcover, an updraft nearly laundered of intent. Palmed and tendered in subaltern shade, I could not shake the memory of a train that whiteily striped the hills. The surrendering pike pours out in uniform. Butter-gloved epiphanies slide past us in their muscle car. In the words of the daffodil, am I in my kerchief more lovely than the ash kicking up against the wheel? What form do women take? Or is she taken like a path to frosty metaphor, a seed easier crushed than opened? Can a word be overturned by jest, or does it take a wayward spark to fire up your arsenal of lace? The darkest blue is black, felt around the edges. I give the cool a running start, a catching chance, rigging our descent to decent landings, piloting home.

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## THE STEAM ENGINE

I came back to the meadow an unsuspecting hart, trying to wake up from a long night of walking. I was looking for a subtext, a heavy horsey bee doing battle with its inclination. What's your angle? A little evanescent on the rim, it's *only* a willow, beaked and shining, a toothy margin holding up banks. Have we overstayed our party in the heavenly city or are we spilling through its gates trying not to get trampled? On the beam I filled a basket with crashing birds. In the dream you pointed sideways with your thumb where the cars were flying.

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THE NETTLE

Idly I turned your name into a kite. Poor bloom couldn't find itself among the interrupted lady. A little less air for the megaphone, a larger flag over Brownsville. We're knotted in eights at bossomy altitudes, foreshortened in the wind. Feet are but a bit of leather, breaking through the turf. A stroke of sunlight in a wreck of a bedroom, a mirror of temporary verbs. As for the daisy, I know I frighten you. My face a red bookishness. The rose willow produces other kinds of monsters but the imperishable nettle thinks for us all.

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OF THE GULF STREAM

While we dug up the garden of western expansion, my witty rope frayed. I was looking for your wirt but now the last grassy sward is about to escort me over the cartoon cliff. If I could only get these eggbeaters to compensate for the awful foreshortened above my head. I always loved your laugh. I could guess your appetite, arrange my torso like a shield. What's wrong with falling into stony gno or folding flowers against our dizzy inward heights? This is what drives us farther out to sea, to look at our mess beneath the bleach and bluing of some other weather.

---

A DESCRIPTION OF  
THE POISON TREE

The girl is a grid, silked with phenomena, an early promise broken into clover. An owl bends both its eyes to this object. Her desire for shining, a symptom of this bashfulness. Among the lower orders a W is sibilant. A physical lantern, honey in the ear. A larger bird's cry may be hidden from view by a broad enough table. I find her in delirium about to pass for real. The letter S between the teeth, pushed back into the mouth, as when confronted she has pointed to the word "paper." She doesn't want to be the dollar sign, split and smirking, living in a desert of bolted-down things.

---

GRATEFUL AS ASPARAGUS

The house of mirth is casting its shadows. My bureau, toy agency,  
a wall of sliding glass. Without its leaky reverie, the face is a shield.  
Who wouldn't love the sycamore in spite of its skin? For a minute  
the fountain was an indoor labyrinth, a garden gone wild into  
perfect order. See the bleeding ankle? The meat of the body left  
alone to run the house. In the company of A or B, in the company  
of M or W, unfixed by science, a leaning spectacle. The delicate  
columns, the popped hill.

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THE OLDEST PART OF THE EARTH

Girl is notational, she's an index. From the couch I see Mary saying yes and no, he and she. We're only clay: blossom machines. Sure I'll carry your latest worry, sorry it's not dripping in your favorite green. Our checks are marked with leafy stains. What lasts forever won't survive its station any more than that juncho can translate through the screen. We're living on, anyway, immaculate lawns. Neo-forsythia.

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THIS CIRCUMSTANCE IS  
WORTH FURTHER ATTENTION

Pertaining to the current trance, "Who Is Sylvia," and "What Is She that All Swains Adore Her," etc? The dahlia's abundance can't help but fix the room, its lesson of impermanence buried in quikrete. Who is the *maître* of county W? Someone was not meant to be beaten on the road, though the stars declare it. Thinly municipal, we're almost brainless waiting on the curb. A fruitless search at war with forgetfulness. Here is an account of my life as a shipmate, W itself. Sighed upon and sleeved, sighing and sleepy, we turn this observation into continental science, encumbered at the gates, the fires of hazardville smoking up our skirts. The word "delicious" has never been redder, the breath of wolves so hot on our ankles, I think we walk on bloody fire.



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