

"Reflection: A Sense of Loss"

Liz Bushman

It took me a mere moment to march to the highest point of our roof; the compulsion to view what was mine was hard to resist when coupled with the logic that today was the coolest day we'd had in a few weeks. Overcast and windy, the 80 degree temperature outside seemed glacial in comparison to the 95+ standard we'd had for so long. And I had a half remembered memory of driving down to the golf course beside the river a few minutes away to pick up my dad, when I had looked at the billowing clouds in the sky framed by full trees in shades of purple blue and dark green; I thought to experience part of that again.

The charcoal-gray roofing beneath my feet was covered with the signs of birds having perched there, but was warm to the touch. I stood, straddling the divide between the east and west slopes, facing the north. The south and the suburbs and city had no appeal to me. Instead, I looked to the bluffs and the river, and beyond that the open farmland, and further still to the golden gleam of the foothills, shadowed to a dark amber by the lack of light, dotted with the dark emerald of oak trees. The sight was framed by more immediate, less native trees; pines and some slender thing that bloomed in the spring. The colors were as muted as everything else.

The wind kicked up and the trees sighed. The sweater-robe-thing I'd gotten a few days ago swished uneasily around me, and my hair and over-long bangs fluttered weirdly. There was a feeling of suspense, and I thought briefly of the times when I had dreamed of sprouting wings and leaping from this very point to soar above the river and across the flat lowland of the valley to those same foothills I saw in the distance. I thought idly of attempting it now-- I could *feel* the wind lifting me up and up and up, floating above glimpses of silver water and ragged, green banks-- and shook the impulse with the ease of long practice.

The wind gentled slightly and I was no longer a bird straining for freedom, but a wizard contemplating the natural forces around her. The trees were whispering secrets and the sky silently rolled above and the street remained silent as the sounds of the mower in the distance dimmed and cars did not drive past. The wind died completely and it was just I standing there; barefoot,

rolled up dirtied jeans, and mismatched friendship bracelets I had made for myself. I brushed my bangs out of my eyes.

The amber-gold of the hills called to me, urging to paint them, walk on (*in*) them, explore them, live on them. I thought wistfully of times when I had driven through them, unable to keep my eyes on the road for the beauty of the country. When I could untangle twisted oaks and breathe the sun-baked dust and think about the color palette of the gold and the brown and the green and the gray. When I could climb the jagged chunks of granite and fence with swords of broken branches and bask in the lazy heat and dream of the times that had been and were now and would be and never were.

I wanted to escape to those hills. I wanted to go to them and live with the beauty.

I stood on the roof, the wind moving my hair and clothes. A lawn-mower whined and the trees danced and a truck moved on the distant highway over the river. This would be the last time I would be up on the roof like this, I knew. The last time I would see the hills and have the temptation to fly and the last time I would be so utterly alone and still where everything was possible.