

Grace Wilentz

**HARMONY
(UNFINISHED)**



Gallery Books

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Contents

PART ONE

Home House	page 13
The Forty Foot	14
Shadowboxing	16
Hospice, New York City, 1995	17
On Hanging Up My Waitressing Uniform	18
Glass Frog	20
A Lean Year	22
Blush on the Pear	23

PART TWO

The Charm	27
Gift of the Magi	28
I Married You	30
Washing the Horse	32
The Artist Fish	33
Caatinga	34
Roça	36
Beaches, Then and Now	37
Past Imperfect	38
Interior with Girl Reading	39

PART THREE

A True Record	43
Young Rose	44
In Which My Dad Teaches Me to Throw a Punch	45
The Harmony Unfinished	46
Lascaux	48
Memento Mori	49
Patience and Order	50
Terme di Saturnia	51
Naming the Foals	54
A Walk in the Woods at Marlay	55
One for Sorrow, Two for Joy	56
Elizabeth Bishop's Stove	57

Acknowledgements and Notes 59

A Lean Year

Where the winter lifted early I woke
to birdsong and empty streets
like a summer only I could inhabit.

When I thought I could no more be surprised
the dreams started to arrive —
different cities every night.

Thursday, I picked over trinkets
at the Turkish Market in Berlin,
Sunday, sipped espresso

and pulpy juice at a beach bar in a Lisbon
suburb, idling by the glittering Atlantic.
In a shoebox room in a London hotel

I wasted a Saturday night on my belly, writing,
feet resting on the leather headboard
under a mirrored eight-pointed star.

I rose without an alarm to those places
receding but with me still, capped
thermos coffee hot, wrapped sandwiches

for eating between rocks at the Forty Foot.
I cycled along the Grand Canal that proved
it could, in the absence of people, cars,

turn its waters crystal, sustain lily pads
wavering up from the silty bed
to bloom fuchsia. You could say it was

a lean year, even if there was a kind
of plenty too. One of those plague years
we pledge to move on from, and forget.

Blush on the Pear

I'm drawn by the perfect blush on the pear.
On her light feet the dog trails as I go into the kitchen.
She follows each movement as I hold the fruit,
begin to slice it. I eat and offer her a taste.

She looks up at me sweetly, asking for more, and more again.
I've given her nearly half, eat the last and leave her to lick
the dish.

Tonight the moon waits, concealed in cloud.
Venus seems to be winking at me from the night sky.

Lascaux

People try to speak to each other, though through an age.
Crouched low by the fire where earth rules, regulating
movement of water and air. No other light reaches

here, where it is safe to remember in the scrape
of stone abraded or the wet sound of pigment swabbed.
The invention of memory in rock, the hand recording

all that goes on discerning: family, enemy,
friend, who lives on the plains, in the forests,
the marshes, who in the rocks, who can move between.

The meanders of the *Vézère* flow through
limestone cliffs, upstream the land softens
and downstream life flourishes. This black carbon,

this red ochre ground for setting images now faint or already
gone. Such small range of colour from which to voice
out of silence, where even whisper will bounce:

this, the beauty we witnessed galloping through.
This, how hard we fought, and this, who remained.
This, all we lost. And this, how great the beast.

Memento Mori

I idle before a replica of the skull of Lucy,
drawn to her large eye sockets,
sharp cheekbones, broad smile,
once the seat of intelligence,
now a bony case, not an emblem
of poison, death or piracy,
but our indefinitely continued existence.

Time will tell what withstands.
She upright, she only very nearly
human. She life, like an instant
still prevailing, keeper of the record
of change, the longer story
captured in frames, intervals,
what lapses, what adapts.

What am I looking for?
What is she trying to tell me?
That sometimes you can live
forever, just not in the way
that you think? Or maybe
that it's possible to leave something
real — you can leave yourself.