



Two Prose Poems

by Diehl, Barbara Westwood

Rosefinch

Once there was a woman who never cut her hair, and her hair was red as a rosefinch. Early evening, she would lean over her balcony rail and let hair fall, an awning darkening the lawn below. The man who sat on this patio below his hanging pots of fuchsias loved to see this hair. He loved it more than hummingbirds hungering for sugar. Once, he had seen the racing pulse of a hummingbird through that curtain of red. What would she have done with a knot of wings? He liked to think of her in a tangle. A woman twined with living things, in a bed, rumpled and red. Her hair frantic with feathers and nails.

One day, he grasped a handful of her hair and lifted it, so she wouldn't feel what he did. Cupping the ends in his hands, he pinched off a bell of fuchsia with stem and leaves and wound it through that rosefinch hair. For days after, he imagined her finding the fuchsia in her hair. He thought this would be such a wonder to her she would not comb it out but keep it there. She would wear the fuchsia to bed, her hair tying the green stem and leaves in knots without her knowing. He imagined the descent of the hummingbird's beak. The open red throat of the flower head on a pillow.

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Spinning

For the rest of her married life, the miller's daughter slept in bed with the king. This was her reward. To sleep with a man who wore his gold crown to bed, and nothing else. To lie with her liege. A spindly man. Thin as the straw she had spun. She could have lost her head. But a girl who filled three rooms with gold, there was a girl worth keeping, he said. So she was kept. The miller's daughter watched the king as he slept. The crown never slipped when he turned in his sleep. It grew from his skull like the pikes on the citadel wall, where other heads were kept, impaled. But the miller's daughter had kept hers. Her spindle, too. She wore it to bed, threaded to the distaff in her spine. Her skein growing, spinning a life of straw to gold.

Barbara Westwood Diehl is founding editor of the *Baltimore Review*. Her fiction and poetry have been published in journals including *MacGuffin*, *Confrontation*, *Potomac Review*, *American Poetry Journal*, and *Measure*.