

Orpheus Says

by Dianne Hunter

She stepped on a snake on her way to the altar. I remember the day as hot and humid, the sky a deep blue in the afternoon with wisps of white clouds moving overhead. The sea, far off, was a choppy blue-green. Sometimes I worry that it was my fault that we hadn't thought to clear the grounds of snakes and other crawling and scurrying creatures of the mountain top. The day afterward I found it impossible to believe she was gone. I didn't believe I'd never see her again.

Her family blamed me, I knew. They never understood why she fell for a musician. Everybody says it was my fault I couldn't bring her back. They thought I failed to trust her to follow me, or that I just couldn't keep my eyes off her. But what I understood at the time was her reluctance to leave darkness.

I dreamt she was a girl again, sometime before she met me. Sometimes I wonder whether she preferred to remain forever young. My mother was heartbroken, but my sister used to say, "I suspect you both made a beautiful escape."

Tomorrow I'll revisit the site where I asked her to marry me and sing a song to whoever wants to join me there.

Tonight, while it's raining, I am restringing my lute and looking at you.