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Snake Dance.

Marie Perret

My neighbour's swimming pool at the old farm is high on a hill top with a panoramic view over rolling hills, forests and fields. I swim there in spring and autumn, before and after the tourists come.

At the end of an unusually warm spring day, close to evening, the shadows of the trees are lengthening over the grass, the air is filled with the sound of insects, and the newly arrived swallows are looping and swooping over the green fields. Despite the day's heat the water is still cold, burning my skin a little and taking my breath away at first. After a while it feels good and I swim for a long time.

Then I stand on the edge of the pool drying myself with my new soft orange towel, my body tingling and alive, my breath still fast, my eyes wide open taking in the whole landscape in an unfocussed way. At the corner of my eye I notice the grass is moving. I look and see that there's a lot of movement, maybe a mouse or a mole about to surface. Suddenly two heads appear above the grass. Snakes, grass snakes, not far from me. They see me and freeze. *'We are invisible, we are not alive, you are not seeing us, we are grass,'* they say. I catch my breath and freeze too, and silently tell them *'I see you and know you are not grass, I will do you no harm, no harm, you are safe.'* What will they do now? I don't move, nor do they, who will break this spell? It is almost comical, two heads motionless above the grass, my body on full alert, tingling all over, holding my breath. They are big, about one metre or more, snakes, grass snakes, no harm. We three stay frozen only for a couple of minutes, yet it seems like time stops. At the same time I am still aware of the swallows looping, the crickets in the grass, bees buzzing past, and all the intense life movement that keeps flowing as we three wait.

In a flash they are moving, I start to breathe again. They are quivering even higher now above the grass, bodies entwining as one twists and spirals all around the other's body. Starting at the neck, the throbbing, pulsating rhythm goes down to the tails. Now bound together in each other's no arms, no legs, embrace, they are still for a moment, amongst the flowers, catching their breaths. Then off again, heads rising high, cruising smoothly through the green meadow. Then again a wild and passionate coupling, a pulsating

spiral from neck to tail. Then up and up again, cruising together, throbbing, spiralling, rhythmic, bursting snake dance. The intense heat of 'cold blooded' snake love.

Crouching now beside the pool, I am entranced by this - what good fortune brought me here, now, at this moment to witness this awesome display of energy and passion. How will it end? Will you continue to twist and spiral for days through the flowery meadows? Rising high, throbbing, pulsating back on the ground again snake love and then collapse somewhere in exhaustion, too tired even to move out of the beating sun? How long have you slithered, separately, slowly, horizontally out of cold rocks, through early spring rains, feeling the new grass growing, hearing the dawn chorus, the first cuckoo, with this longing stirring in your bellies, in your snake hearts? And then that first chance meeting on a sunny hillside, *oh wonder, oh bliss,* and your whole world changes. Suddenly becoming vertical, *oh what a wide world this is, oh what curves,* surfing through the grass, speeding over the landscape like skaters on an icy pond. Riding these body waves, circling, embracing, two bodies becoming one. Snake passion, snake dance, spring lovers throbbing amongst the flowers and the moss.

And you let me watch you, taking my breath away, beloved snakes, so I forget that I am standing almost naked in the setting sun on the hilltop, the pool water gently lapping behind me, the swallows still swooping to catch flies. Filled to bursting with awe and excitement, with joy, with the privilege of witnessing this incredible life dance.

Moments that stretch elastic,
spilling out beyond time, beyond space,
your wild passionate love carries me
through a threshold into a space of no mind,
brimming over into eternity, into silence.

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