



Imperfect Paradise

It's paradise, this house nuzzled into the hillside amidst the oaks and redwoods with its wide wrap-around deck. The sun spills through the trees.

Clouds, falcon and redtail hawks slide through blue air. Redwood perfume rises from the forest floor. No schedule for rising or sleeping.

All is paradise for a week or a month, until mice arrive and build a nest in the water heater making the hot water run cold. Then, woodrats

discover the storage room, covering the floor with excrement. You clean the mess, set traps, ready for rest when you look out into the yard

to find a gopher hole inside the herb bed, the sage drooping and near death. A buzzing outside the window, and wood dust flitters down.

Carpenter bees are drilling holes in the eaves for nests. Next, miniature bats come to roost in the roof, birds peck away the strawberries,

and the neighborhood peacock begins to holler. Five months of crying for a mate before he'll quiet down again. Wildflowers woven among

weeds and wonder, we are as close to the earth here as in childhood. Mushrooms and strawberries scattered across the hillsides, wind singing

through the liquid trees—in spite of everything, it's paradise here. Pure paradise.

—ANNA CITRINO

image info