

Wilderness House Literary Review 10/2

Ken Massicotte

To call myself beloved

*And did you get what you wanted from this life, even so?
I did.*

*And what did you want?
To call myself beloved, to feel myself beloved on the earth.
Raymond Carver*

he woke up scared
in solitary
I would not survive
I need you and you
like high school I called you up
recalling a cathedral
notes from the underground
neither hero nor insect
I stole for you
tunneling
a shame I could not name

he woke in the vehemence of night
metal cots in a long low room
in a cinder block dorm
dark but the drawings iridescent
a trompe d'oeil of windows
tacked to the walls
abiotic but a shimmer of breath
he lifted him unbegun
by the dead
weight, the clothing
kept scaling
like armour
like scrapped mail

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I busy myself with jobs
disciplined to ignore
the peripheral
haunt, the swamp
I stick to the boards
I've carefully placed
beyond the window

there's an ad for a killer
on my screen a lean
lawman
rolled up sleeves
badge on belt
flanked by cocked arms
stalking, half profiled head
blue eyes
hawking vicious
invaders inside the walls
a boy on my street called fly

I escaped to the underground
voices in a studio
my singing teacher waiting
I couldn't meet her eye
a vocal score
snaked from her mouth
transferring a thousand
finely drawn variations of scorn
her face flashing mimicry
my unbidden hidden code
but her eyes were wild with disbelief
her throat crying my canticle
and I found a way to find her faith

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we do what we can with what we have
7 billion awake each day
only 3,000 suicide
if you ride the metro you can feel
the quarrel of worry
the static of sadness....
it is you and I
living to be loved
on this earth.

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How to survive in space

67, 000 miles per hour
in orbit spinning
around the sun
over 1,000 mph
on your own axis
you mustn't become
overwhelmed
it is stable
you have trained for this
DNA
fire, language, prayer
years at school

a few things to remember

you are not alone
most will help you
comrades, family
some will love you

keep control
this experiment
you were chosen
to travel the stars

all the same
people fuck up

bury the dead
forgive them, in their shoes
work, trust
invitations for coffee

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birthday parties
your own music
swim in the ocean on leave
love

bone deep
Neolithic kin
the succeeding prophets –
a single act of kindness
lives forever

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I'd like to tell my story

*Poem of broken quotes **

1.

I'd like to tell my story
as you from crimes would pardoned be
he wandered unconsciously till he slipped and fell
surrounded by sheer slopes and precipices
and as he fell something broke
and quiet that has never known fury or despair
feeling with each breath himself diffuse
while someone else is eating or opening
a window or just walking dully along
until then, I didn't know how sad I was
I will wring your neck
I will stitch your eyelids shut
I will sew your shroud
barely a day goes by without my picking up
hints of someone's urgent misery
controlled hysteria is what's required
the difference is I try to take mine home...to sing
he had come to the hollow basin of snow
I don't know where I should go

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2.

what happens when the one who dreamt us wakes up and feels ashamed
she yearned for complete solitude that verged on the violent
I seek like such a beast with my little strength
with nothing of its species left but fear
my punishment is more than I can bear
it was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman
that is what you do when you breathe, you trespass, again and again on
the world
then the fifth angel poured out his vial and they gnawed their tongues for
pain
but I'm only going to dread one day at a time
for my heart's a furred sharp-toothed thing
that rushes out whimpering
about suffering they were never wrong
the Old Masters

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3.

I move so carefully slow because
I'm afraid a boat
so small would sink
with the weight
of all my sorrow
now or never, you need me, you will need me
there's no greater story than ours
a story of giants, a story of new ancestors
a bird had flown in, it left a blessing
the wildness bringing the wind
the brittle and beautiful dream itself
let your indulgence set me free
said one of them so bold
I feel I'm turning into gold

*Acorn, Auden, Becket, Bergman, Robinson, Cohen, Coplin, Faulkner, Flanagan, Joy Kills Sorrow, King, King James Bible, Knausgard, Lawrence, Li Ch'ing-Chao, Lopate, Miller, Neruda, Schulz, Shakespeare, Smith, Winders