

Wilderness House Literary Review 10/2

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You Just Can't win

when you
move
to manhattan
you meet
a lot
of people (mainly women)
who come
from "means".
they hang out
in the marble
lobbies
of
boutique hotels
and drink
fancy
cocktails
and talk a lot
of shit.

i met
a girl
on the job
who worked
at a "non-profit"
where
basically
you asked your parents
not to give
you
any christmas gifts.
instead,
you
asked them to donate

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the gift money to the
"non-profit"
for just the
one day, of that
one year.

our first date (our only date)
went fine.
she played
the ukulele
i played the guitar
we sang
taylor swift
songs
and looked
at the domino sugar factory
and when i said
"lets go to the water front"
she said,
"my apartment
has a better view"

later,
i sat
with
a cigarette
on her brooklyn
roof top
patio
overlooking
all of
downtown manhattan
and
i
thought about

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how nice life was
to those
who could
forfeit their christmas money
and still
pay rent
on an apartment
with a
roof top patio
that
overlooked
all
of
downtown manhattan

eventually i had to leave
and i ate
for
the first time that
day
the one
piece
of
dollar pizza
i could scum
up enough
change
to buy
and
all around me
were
one
legged bums
and
mexican families

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with 30 kids
and the short black man
with no teeth
who sang
the lollipop gang
song
for
some loot

and
i knew i'd never be her hero
and it
wasn't even winter,
every puddle
i stomped
through
broke apart,
but eventually
when
the ripples
came back together
it
was
still me
i
was
staring at.

she
may have been
the savior
of
the starved,
but the next morning
i

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had
a text message
that said,
“you’re really
nice, but
i can’t
date
a
bellman.
it just
wouldn’t
look
right”.

it was
another
night
i abandoned
my dog
for
a woman
that i’d never
get back

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something like love

i
miss you
blue eyes
lying in your
bed
while you walked
across campus
looking at
jersey mountains
rolling away from your path
like the sleeping stomachs
of giant buddhas
and me staying
warm
making the bed
so we could unmake it
using your roommates
teapot to bring
your small bones back to
life
and your soft skin
under my heat
it could be love you said

you hate
me now
blue eyes
you used the
bruises of your old
lovers to build back
something more
and i let my old
loves leave me

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with less
i could see
no dark spots
in you
but my pain
needed company
and when once
you thought
love could conquer
by our epitaph
your eyes
held the ruin of
an idea
abandoned
it could've been love you said

who are we
now blue eyes?
i've erased
the words and the doubt
i only remember
how your cat ran away
every time i opened the door
and even though
your dad was
a cop i tried
to like him anyway
we had no vices
then
we could go
to the zoo sober
and smile at turtles
and pet giraffas
that night we drove all night
i reminded you of

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those turtles
who seemed to smile back
and we rolled
and kissed
and ignored our sins
and once again
we talked about
forever
i always try and
go back to
that night i let you
get on the plane
and you left me
and new jersey behind
it can still be love
i said

i always try and go back to that night
in my mind
in my songs
because
it was something like love
we were something like love

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men

i never
questioned that
my father was a
real man, he
could do
those
things. things
weaker fathers couldn't.
(give a funeral
speech without
tearing. build a shed
and fill it
with tools
he knew how
to use).
things
they say
make a man.

my father
had no doubt
that
i was not a man,
had none of the
qualities
and didn't show
much hope
of figuring it out

he liked to
say, "you think
you just flush
a toilet

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and it goes
away?
what's going to
happen when it doesn't
go away
and it comes back
and you and all your
idiot
friends are drowning
in poop?
you're all
gonna
die because
you don't even know
how to use
a toilet
plunger.
you'll see"

his brother
was the same.
he wrestled
in high school
and he
always said it
taught him
things but as
far as I could
tell he did
everything wrong

they both had
a favorite
place
to give

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advice.
on the couch.
during
football commercials.

i found
it hard to concentrate
on words
men spoke
while watching other
men
throw balls
at each other
and try
their hardest
to lay on
the most
submissive one.

sports.
this was
supposed
to be the triumph
of all men,
and every sunday
my dad
would yell
and cry,
never giving any thought
to after
the game, when
all
forty of them took one big
shower together