

Wilderness House Literary Review 10/2

Simon Perchik

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The same dingy elevator
not in service
though to wish is the easy part
—once its doors are sealed
the gust likes it in the back
and you make good time
cut the sky in half :both doors
opening the way your foot
fell suddenly between

—you stumbled in front a butterfly
that no longer moves, its wings
folded over, changing again
into an evening spread out
from the bottom up
reaching across a road
that stays dark more than the others
lifts its dirt to your shoulders
and along the helpless buttons
lets it fall, bathing you
floor by floor, any day now.

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Going somewhere with you
is all it holds on to
—a single blanket

the kind the dead carry
over them
—you can't tell the difference

though you wish there were
—to warm is all it knows
and you are led under

till your mouth opens
looking for her
—to kiss, empty her throat

with your own —on faith
you stretch out
bring back to the room

her damp scent
tied at one end
and not the other

—with both eyes closed
you show her her picture
without thinking.

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The guy with the squeegee
has no idea how cold dust is
or why it's taking so long

for her reflection to cover the glass
with sirens, whistles, more ice
—he's nervous bathing the mannequin

half naked, half with water
fresh from your heart
—you're in the way! wedged

between her motionless mouth
and the shadow that is yours
—no matter how easy enough

you don't touch the window
ready to break open
wipe her breasts dry.

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Both hands and this ink
the way the dead are sheltered
—you fill the pen

with slowly behind
loosen those tiny stones
you still drink from :you write

as if this shovel
had carried away the Earth
into moonlight where mourners

appear underneath your fingertips
as words and rain and lips
—there's always a first time

—the ink would overflow
rush through the lines
left helpless on this page

—you hold on —why not!
—already a fountain
digging for the sky

its unfinished grave
and every evening
is an everywhere her heartbeat.

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This pot-luck maple
— a baby! and already
leaf by leaf collapsing

and though you bathe in ice water
your only chance
is from the silence

found in absolute zero
whose undermining monotone
is quieted the way a millstone

half streams, half churchyards
half that sweet blossom
every child is born as

carries around on its shoulders
the unfolding whisper
for heavier blankets, woolens — noise

ages everything! this tiny tree
trying to gag the Earth
with dead leaves and hillsides

— with its molten core
bubbling through the branches
and nothing is cold enough.