

## Wilderness House Literary Review 11/4

*Julia Carlson*

### NEON TOILET

These are the words you said to me -  
Las Vegas is a neon toilet  
The toilet where your mother sank  
Desperate as a herring swimming upstream  
Her black dress floating in the sparkling aqua pool  
Her dying breath sinking her anger tight  
Then, you hated her death  
Hated being the king of fools  
A child king who didn't see -  
Those are the words you said to me  
But I love you and your pain  
You know as well as I  
Pain is all we are, we've said it many times  
Even though we don't want to believe it  
Even though we cut ourselves every day -  
Still we do not believe it  
Las Vegas is our vacation home  
Where we fuck a whore  
Think that for once  
We're excused from the exam  
We fuck a whore and insist  
We know all the answers  
If only life were that simple -  
But listen, in our arrogance and ineptitude  
We preach to ourselves -  
We are our own God and  
We will flush ourselves down this neon toilet  
The shit is pretty there  
It glows in the dark.

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### PROVOCATEUR

He does not care that we watch him  
Eat lettuce and swim in a water dish  
Or stick his pointy head  
Through a knothole in the patio fence  
Wag it from side to side  
Taunting the dog next door  
Who waits, then pounces  
To snap off its head  
But always just misses.  
I find it astonishing -  
The game that Crystal's turtle plays.  
I read somewhere  
Turtles make lousy pets  
They are single-minded  
And ignore their masters  
Who dislike their attitude.  
I watch him make his way  
Plodding and steady  
Over stone, branch, and pinecone  
To get to the other side.  
The turtle knows to draw himself in  
Where no dog can reach.