

Wilderness House Literary Review 11/4

Robert Krantz

Monkey

Your body knew how to die—
most mornings
we placed you in a rocker
facing the window
and brought you
warm glasses of beer
as you smoked Pall Malls
and watched the gray birch
lose its leaves

At night
you curled on father's bed,
a caterpillar,
and I played Mario Lanza records for you
because we left the Jim Nabors's ones
back in New York.

After, when I was in community college
and your ashes were spread,
I learned about Harlow's monkeys
and terrycloth.

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I would slowly starve to death
to hear you in the kitchen
speaking Polish to your sister
on the phone,
watch you crumple a milk carton
under your house slipper,
cover me with a blanket
while I'm napping or
beat your breast for Christ at mass

The world is a wire cage
spitting pellets