

Wilderness House Literary Review 13/2

Simon Perchik

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You lean into this tree as if its roots
struck something made from wood
no longer moves, became an island

with mountains laid out in rows
and though they have no arms
they open them when someone

is left close by –under such a weight
their hands break apart the Earth
from feeling their way around it

grave after grave, blinded by moonlight
as the chunks you never saved
form this nearly empty night

with nothing but the bright green hole
this dying tree drains, keeps dry
between what you wanted and the shine.

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From inches away his finger can't miss
–the other kid plays dead, falls arm over arm
the way all games come with a well

are filled with wishes hardened into stones
sure the Earth would go along
though there's no splash –what you hear

is the thud that purifies each death
as one aimless night followed by another
overflowing and this park

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becomes the sudden laughter
you no longer get to be
are waiting for this dry wooden bench

to open, let you in, hear the stream
stones hear when young, not yet
sent to the bottom even in the afternoon.

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You dead still look out at water
are sheltered inside these row-houses
laid down along the shore –each grave

waiting for your Moses-like wave
the way a valley is dried
for rafts made from stone

though water never leaves you
covers each afternoon
with the few hours it needs

between your hands
kept separate to clear a path
as if nothing happened.