

## Wilderness House Literary Review 20/1

*Ken Massicotte*  
**kmassi poems**

### *Kinship*

Beyond the discipline  
of housekeeping  
in my cinder block dorm the worry rises like smoke  
from buried peat.

I visit kin  
but row out across the bay alone.  
I talked to my sister  
but cannot tell her  
I'm watching from the water,  
waiting for someone to reach in  
and pull me up.

Last night --

*a train you hear  
in the clear night air*

*the clack and whisper of wheels,  
the firefly code of the disappeared*

*no whistle stops  
only the whirr of wings --*

like blood, the black night  
space beyond the Kármán line  
where even satellites will decay.

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It's not always like this.  
It's spring  
and the leaves are giddy.

But my dreams are alleys  
of cell blocks and broken brick;  
animal trails  
to riverside graves --  
epitaphs, clan  
I cannot forsake.

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### **When Death Comes**

*After Gustav Mahler: Ich Bin Der Welt Abhanden Gekommen*

When death comes like a hungry bird  
I will lay in her lap as I learned to do,  
feel the anguish of what will come  
of what has been.

*It was never an ocean  
her heart a maelstrom  
whirling dread  
body after body  
the dirty incarnation.*

When death comes like an angry bird  
I will lay in her lap and listen,  
breathe her solace  
and believe I can swim.

When death comes like a frantic bird –  
wings beating fear,  
the air thick with prayer –  
I will watch for shadows and disappear,  
blanket myself as I learned to do.