

Wilderness House Literary Review 20/3

Jon Raimon

Manhood

To be that composed

To be in that much pain

To be that stoic

wiry black hair, barely combed

To be so cradled by reason

To be so broken

To be so emasculated

pee bags, catheters, power brought low

To be so clearheaded

To be so morally grounded

To be so ready to do battle

At nineteen, a hot shot, shot through the neck fighting fascists

To be so filled with love

To be so hard

To be so alone

wheelchair and New York Times and tucked handgun

To be so physical

To be so vibrant

To be so broken

hurling little me across his lap, a soldier's grip on my arm, near the
breaking point, all laughter and safety in that violent embrace

and the breaking point would come, for him, and he stood alone
well, sat alone, reclined alone.

Door closed. and in his note just

"No guilt. None. Love, Dad"

and I didn't hear the shot and I hear the shot sometimes now, and I wish
that none of us men ever have to be that alone in our power and our
fear

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Relapse

Four years clean,
My brother, done now:
fallen, stubbled, seething

Four ICU-Wishes
gurgled through his
Intubation tube

One - To witness his
Daughter, whole and
Bold, glorying in
Her Laughter and distance

Two - To heal, flesh and
Memories, cobbled and,
Stitched, holding on
To nothing, his hunched

Shoulders to the sunset. Three -
To work, his now
Tremulous heart
And hands firmed up,
Mind honed, ready

For what? Four -
To connect,
To strangle isolation
In its nightclothes, to caress
And be caressed. Loved.

With a plastic pint, four
Years, four wishes, pissed
Away to the four directions:

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It can come again
Sonny hums to his brother, my
Brother sputters to me:
Loneliness, our one
True and deadly language