



## Wilderness House Literary Review 4/4

"The feedbag you're supposed to slide down your ass on, dip. It's for your ass. It's for the slide. You're supposed to get one when you get your ticket."

"They didn't give us one. Do we need to get one?"

"I don't give a fuck what you do," Slim says, flicking a cigarette butt down into the cornfields.

"Look!" Sammy yelps.

The view is incredible. The sun is setting beneath a bloody cloud. Thousands of acres of corn stalks spread out below us for miles, shimmering gold in all directions. The cut of I-70 is like a river; silver trucks slip up and downstream. For a second, I think: "I'm going to like Oregon."

But Sammy is pointing to the roadway between the highway exit and the parking lot. And that's when I see it- Aunt Mona's little yellow Datsun, driving away from us, back toward the highway.

Sammy starts crying. "She's leaving us. Come on!"

We jump on the slide, but it's pointless. Without the feedbags, we have to shimmy down the entire length of the blue plastic slide. Sammy starts screaming at me. "Come on! Faster!" We can still see her car; she's stopped at the west bound ramp, at a lone payphone by the side of the road. As we shimmy further down, her car, the highway, the road all disappear, sliding, like we are doing, slowly into the tall corn stalks. At the bottom of the slide we run for the parking lot. It is totally empty now. The lights have come on. Moths circle the lamps and crickets scream in the dense fields around us. Sammy crumples cross-legged on the pavement. Then we see headlights. "It's Aunt Mona," Sammy yells. He runs to the car. "I knew you'd come back! I knew you wouldn't leave us here!"

At the highway ramp, Aunt Mona stops for a moment; then turns onto the east bound lane. This is awfully melodramatic, I think to myself. She's not actually going to drive all the way back to Baltimore, is she?

Instead she turns off the highway in Topeka, and drives us to an airport. Without speaking, she pulls our suitcases out of her trunk, walks to a ticket counter and buys us two airplane tickets to Baltimore. I'm relieved, but Sammy starts crying again.

"But what about our new home?" he whines. I stifle another laugh, and cringe, awaiting a new blast of hysterics.

"Who's going to take care of us? Where are we going to live?"

"You will return to the Institute," she sighs flatly, as she turns away from us. "It's the best place for you. I understand that now."

We board our flight. I let Sammy take the window seat, where he watches little red car lights slide off west into the fields, then falls asleep on my shoulder.

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Review, 34th Parallel, Hot Metal Press, Melic Review, Smokelong Quarterly, Johnny America, the Starry Night Review, the East Hampton Star and the City Writers Review. Frank is a Board member of the NY Writers Coalition, a nonprofit group committed to providing creative writing opportunities for disenfranchised New Yorkers.