

## Wilderness House Literary Review 5/2

*Jared Smith*

### **A Poem to be Finished Later**

Don't die in the little rooms with white sheets.  
Don't die where it is easy and there is no pain,  
where no owls twist their talons beneath the moon,  
where shadow takes you suddenly oh no.

Go not into the intravenous drug cave.  
There is only one pain in all eternity to know.  
Go not back from the battle when all is lost,  
but let the shadow find itself going out  
and leave a word your being can hold oh.

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### Learning to Drive

Before I died I propped myself up and watched  
the Leonid meteor shower over New York City,  
each molten stone etched across one vast glass,  
for 20 minutes a torrent of heat and light across  
horizons cutting through chimneys and furnaces.  
You were scared and attentive and held my hand  
but when they released me three weeks later you  
said there were low clouds that night and no light  
as far as you or others in the city could see. And

so I've thought about that ever since, and the cold  
between the clouds between stars between time,  
and I've thought of how we sit before computers  
and how we sit before television sets and bar signs  
and how they reflect from puddles in dark alleys,  
their red eyes bleeding deep into our cold wet bones.  
I've watched insects dance frenetic beneath lamps  
with a subtler sense of the futilities perhaps but  
knowing nothing gained is nothing lost and then

there was something passing quickly above us,  
something as hard as the atoms of which we're made  
and as fast as the thoughts inside our tired minds,  
and we would have seen it if we had not made what  
we made that we could give a name. And passing  
in itself brings light and friction and heat and seeds  
germinating, and what goes out comes back across.

The radio in my car is often on but is turns off on  
nights we are alone. The cell phone in my pocket  
is mute and dead metal. The pager thrown away.  
We are learning to drive across the desert. The city  
we left behind is nothing more than sand.