

Wilderness House Literary Review 5/4

Ron Riecki

Griffith Park, Haunted Hayride, Dusk, 2010

Don and Cinderella
walk up the hill slowly,
tired;
this is the third week
of work
and their knees hurt;
they're sick.
They're both in straitjackets.
I am too.
It's minimum wage,
survival money.
It's bad out there.
Cinderella wants to be a rapper.
She's from Montana.
There's nothing hip-hop about her,
except she curses a lot.
She thinks that's what it means
to be black.
It pisses me off,
but I don't say anything.
I can't.
I have a steel bar in my mouth
all night long.
Don had three words
in *Inglourious Basterds*
for one of its deleted scenes.
He's 44.
He's getting divorced.
He tells us how to make it in L.A.
as an actor.
I watch them walk up the hill
and it's eating them,
this hill;
it's taking something
from them.
It's taking something
from me.
I never thought I'd get this far
and have this little.
I was told if I was kind
it would all work out.
The person who told me that
has M.S.
She's a painter
who can no longer paint.
She used to do outdoor scenes
like this one,
except without the people.

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On The Night She Broke Up With Me

I went
to put out
the garbage

and looked up
in time
to see

the Space
Shuttle
taking off.

It looked
like an airplane
on fire.

I kind
of wished
it was.

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Baraga Maximum Security Correctional Facility

The room where I taught in prison
had no bars, no cameras, no guards,
no desks, no erasers, no clock.

It was sixteen prisoners, me, thirteen pens,
a single thick notebook of paper, a fly strip, chairs,
chipped white paint, Islamic graffiti on the floor,
and a warning that I was never to turn my back, ever,
that I was always to keep the class in front of me,
that the pens they held could kill me,
and that they wouldn't understand anything
beyond a high school level.

Together, that semester, we probably wrote
a thousand poems
in tiny handwriting,
so tiny
no one besides the author
will ever see them.