

Wilderness House Literary Review 6/1

Robert S. King

How the Invisible Go Blind

The morning after my last friend died,
walls vibrate with neighbor voices
preparing for work and elementary school.
I get up, ache toward the bathroom
mirror to inspect my face,
but see only that I am invisible.

When the mirror quits rippling from shock,
I get hold of myself, slap the air until I find a face.

Am I a ghost now, a hole left in all I've touched?
Now everything I touch disappears,
my finger poking waves in a pond of air,
my heart knocking like a badly tuned engine.
I must be careful not to touch it.

Even my voice is lost.
The easy chair vanishes when I sit down.
The radio goes down into the waves,
its voice gurgling like a distress signal.
The whole apartment is near empty and cold.
My library of great literature was written
in vanishing ink. I crackle with the power of touch.
So I lay my hands on pictures of those
who expected love; they fade away one by one
into the shadows born of my touch.

Yet I can feel the hidden solids
as I bump into them; we somehow bruise
one another still, though I cannot name
them anymore and no longer have to face them.

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Over my invisible floor,
over a neighbor's clear ceiling,
I walk naked and lost toward a knock on my door.
I turn the key, and the door melts away like water;
the knocker puddles at my feet, a bleeding heart;
the building too splashes down. I touch
the ground outside, and the world crumbles
away to shadow, the fabric of space and time.

The center of their own solar systems,
the shines of heavenly faces expect
my warmest touch. But star by star,
I turn off the lights of life.

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Apology for My Superiority

I never placed an ad for disciples,
but I'm flattered by how you crowd me.

Tonight in your smother love,
the stars come out and swarm
like pests around my aura.

The wind serenades me
but clumsily musses my hair.
It's hard to find good help.

The fall trees bow as I pass
and roll red leaves along my path
so that I never touch dirt.

The homeless and sick stage
a fundraiser street play in my honor;
my applause walking on raises dust.

I bless them all on their knees
and blush because I do look good in red.

Honestly, I'm just a man
who is always growing up
but still dutifully looking down.

In the barricaded street to my door,
the pleas cannot outreach the arms.
Perhaps I'll have some leftovers.

I just washed up for dinner.
I do apologize for not laying
on my hands.

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Perspective

Under the weight of hunger
I point my arms skyward
until they lock in place,
shape my hands like birds,
like open mouths above me,
begging to inhale the smoky clouds
sailing blue ocean, where eagles
swimming on their backs
think I am falling,
a diver to drown in the deep blue pool,
a small wave maker for heavy clouds,
those ever-moving targets
for my impossible dreams.

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Retirement Benefits

In the hermitage of my old age
all pain is young,
is a child on fire
rolling in dead leaves.

Some water with the pill, please . . .

In my old age
all wealth is a favor
of kindness and patience
paid to me this day.

Here's a coupon for extra cheese . . .

In my old age
all love is melted candy
left but not long lasting
in the aftertaste.

Some honey with the dose, please . . .

In my old age
all memory is soup
stirred fondly in a hundred flavors
but tasted as a whole.

May I have some more, sir . . .

In my old age
all energy is spent
on the power bill
and the little food for thought.

Just water today, thanks . . .

In my old age
all joy is an old photograph
of a smile I remember,
of a face I almost recall.

Really? You need ID?

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In my old age
all regret is an echo,
an old road a rope tied
to my waist.

Could you help me to my feet?

In my old age
ambition is a race
against the clock
spinning faster
in my slow motion

tug to the finish line.

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Trial Run

Now that time runs faster than light,
I take my old diary deeply
into my private woods.

I recline against the elder oak,
place the open book in fallen leaves,
let wind turn clockwise
the yellowed pages of my life
faster than I can read.

Blurred photos click by as pages turn,
people or ghosts who have forgotten me.
Why do they smile, these strangers?
Where have their shadows gone?

The wind dies before me;
it will not take me away today,
leaves the last page open and empty
as a whisper.
I rise with a blank stare,
take this ending out in the world
to finish.