

Wilderness House Literary Review 6/2

Bill Roberts

The Bi-Polar Cynic Optimists

There was a time not so long ago
when I was employed, paid a salary.

Not a handsome salary, just the ordinary
good looking one, making me happy.

I was optimistic about the future, and
why not – the wife was employed, too.

Then something dreadful happened:
we both turned fifty about the same time.

Our employers looked warily at us,
saw the telltale wrinkles, studied our pay.

Time to turn these two out to pasture,
so to speak, pasture being the street.

So here we are barely earning enough
begging, out on street corners.

Yes, that's us, holding up the handmade
signs, ending with "God Bless You."

We close with that epithet because once
we were optimists – it came naturally.

We're no longer optimistic, don't attend
church regularly – can't afford it.

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Crashing the Party in Heaven

God, it looks like they're having fun,
those folks, many my old friends,
on the other side of the barrier,
dancing to loud, familiar rock music,
a menacing looking bouncer checking
the identity of people in a long line,
me queued up near the tail end.

By the time I finally reach the entryway,
my feet are jumping to sax sounds,
the bouncer unamused by my footwork,
asking to see credentials, my pass
to the dance floor, and as he checks
them, I say, Wow, so this is Heaven.

He hesitates, says, No sir, this in fact
is Hell, just in time for the marathon.
Crestfallen, I stammer, But there's
my trusted banker, dancing with my dog
groomer. And over there, our minister
and his wife, dancing like youngsters.
Our local representative to Congress,
leading that good looking society woman.
Look, man, there must be some mistake.

He looks me square in the eye, lets out
an ugly laugh, whispers, Oh, no sir,
they're all here. You've come to the right
place, and soon you'll have a partner.
The dance just started, may never end.

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Flowers in the Guest Room

Most guests are thrilled
to find fresh flowers
in a nice vase in their room
when they arrive, settle in.

Depending on the guest,
or guests, my wife chooses
which seems best suited
for the invasion, er, occasion.

Rosebuds seem to last longest,
for when a close relative lands.
roses in bloom usually wither
in just a few days, for casuals.

Whoever the guests may be,
they'd better heed my wife's
message via flowers: they start
wilting, you start packing.

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The Not So Surprising Return of the Tree House

They're proliferating in the woods
almost as fast as rabbits.

Tree houses. Like in the old days
when they were so plentiful.

Out in the backyard in a shady oak,
elm or maple – had to be sturdy.

Primitive back then: just a lone room,
wood floor, usually orange crate.

Window if you were lucky and Dad
had the time and gumption.

Now, several rooms, multiple levels,
for kids and the rest of the family.

A winding staircase, cramped kitchen,
portable toilet, carry-up water.

Electricity is a problem, so lots
of darkness to save on batteries.

It's a temporary fix for the housing
problem, loans so hard to get.

Don't shake my tree has a different
meaning: Beware – Humans Above.