

## Wilderness House Literary Review 6/3

*Chris Crittenden*

### **Closet**

in the dark the shirts  
in the closet are ghosts,  
suicides that hung themselves  
that way. faint  
moonlight dredges up  
a slump of someone's collar.  
the boy on the bed  
wants to go inside, stick his head in--  
to try on every limp body,  
find out every why  
from these skeletons  
that hang on hooks  
shaped like the letter Y.

he wants to be in the middle.  
wrapped up, strangled, hugged.  
he wants all these bodies  
to be fabrics of snatching web.  
and as he struggles  
he beholds the intricacy  
of the monster,  
its cheekless face,  
how it torments in echoes,  
reminds him of love  
that died mangled in its beak.

somehow, fitting into  
the agony of all his fears,  
he must go down.

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### Prophecy

a raven chips  
at the flavor of ice,  
knows well plateaus of cold.

since egg, it has lived  
without roof. never savored  
the gist of flame.

breaking through  
the shell of a puddle,  
it unearths a stiff cat,

and with vigorous jabs  
splays organs to  
rummage for treats.

nothing left afterward  
but an epilogue  
of gut and bone.

the cat meat  
new to small black tongue.  
the meaning unclear.

as never before,  
the prophet rushes off,  
rasping,

and beating the folds  
of its cloak.

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### Flooded Gutter

trash floats thick  
like a python slow  
with cancer.

we watch soiled husks  
bob toward drains,  
nodding

like sycophants  
and barely able to swim.  
they stink

of the trouble  
of denied decay,  
of stress held hostage

in antsy cars.

we do our best not  
to fathom their pall.  
their ignominy.

their lack of face.

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### Stormy

what some call fatal  
others deem food.  
the wounded reach up  
alongside the supple.  
a crow bleats as fractured nests  
sift down.

animals of water  
orgy in flooded streets.  
their moans gorge  
on a mill of shapeless skin.  
streetlights swing like biceps,  
fiercely working slush.  
the wail of an ambulance  
scissors liquid, cutting  
its sheets of sighs.

some of us dance nude on  
greased tar while rainbows  
lick our feet. others wrap in  
hurried layers of pelt and rubber.  
ripples slither-slip over  
the anguish of the pummeled stage,  
reminding us of shattered  
rules.

a pigeon swerves  
then jackknives madly  
becoming the story of a whip.

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### Half Awake

midnight remakes  
his cheekbones.  
the mirror a taskmaster.

wrinkles turn  
to chasms.  
stubble bristles in waves.

everyone is there,  
beyond the night light's  
hubbub:

people-who-once-were,  
dancing in corners, or snickering  
behind coats.

timeless dust  
swallows their confusion.  
privacies fray.

he looks around,  
risks the crowds'  
uncertainty.

they crawl  
from the fringes,  
tunneling out of optics:

every excuse,  
martyr  
or guilty smile.