

Wilderness House Literary Review 6/3

Jeffrey DeLotto

A Karankawa Near Garcitas Creek, Matagorda Bay October, 1684

Have some tea, Monsieur LeBon, is that how
You say it? Boiled from that Yaupon holly at
The edge of the sand, the tea will make you strong
Again; use this bowl with the handle I found near
Your staying place. Here, I will hold it for you,
Your hands are of course bound very tight with
The Yucca fiber, not as smooth as your boat's
Rope but good enough for us poor Karankawa.
Oh, don't lift your eyes to the sky, the tears, like
A welcoming Caddo there, but the pain will pass,
And we have much to share, you and I, and I
Grow hungry — yes, LeBon, if eyes could pierce,
I would be full of holes and I would now die,
But I will not, nor will you. That last slice I took,
From your lower back, just a hand's length piece,
The width and depth of the middle finger I lost
To the snapping jaws of that wild pig four seasons
Past, you faced it like a man, until you saw it spit
And crackle over the fire, until my first slow bite,
Sprinkled with a pinch of salt from the drying stone,
Though a man's flesh does not need much added salt,
So well greased and spiced we already are...and now
You understand I will consume your spirit piece
By piece until you exist only in me. Come, sit up,
The sun is very tall, all those coverings you wear
Make you sweat so, and your skin so bright, no
Tattoos to show who you are, but I will change all
That today, eh? But let me pull off one of those
Long leather cases you have on our feet — pah! —
How they stink, but the big toe, LeBon, that big,
Soft fat toe, how it will pop and sizzle — I see I
Must wrap the legs together, so, along this trunk
Of driftwood before you will let me have it, and

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This knife you brought us, so bright and shiny,
Remember? But perhaps an arm is better, up near
The last joint, where you can see the swiftness of
My knife, and I don't wish you to faint away into
A world of ignorance—a man should be aware of
Himself and where he is going...See? You felt
Just a chill, like brushing against a frosty branch,
And then the sting as the edge made its way through
The skin, and so sharp, just a handful of bright red
Beads of blood, the flap still held closed, and, here,
LeBon, look into my eyes, and—see? You did not
Guess the second cut so soon—Stay with me a short
Span of day longer, breaking man, so that I might hold
Your essence like an opened oyster and slide it down
My upturned throat....Uh, he is gone for now, into
That forced sleep of fear.

LeBon and I have time until he wakes again, and here
Growing along this stream are fine straight canes for
Arrow shafts to replace those I lost in that beautiful
Snook that swam off a day ago near the sandspit's tip,
Oh, what food that fish would have been for all my
Family. But I look at this piece of bleeding man and
Have to wonder what drove him here, and will I feel
That pull, and how many more will we share into our
Bodies until our spirits become theirs?