

## Wilderness House Literary Review 6/4

*Julia Carlson*

### **Addiction**

Everywhere a river  
A bright glass shard in the river  
Your lips like peaches  
Your eyes like a river  
Looking everywhere  
I see in your eyes  
How deep the river is  
The green glass on the bottom  
The water rushing over it and  
Wearing it down to dull  
Everywhere your river  
Moving and flowing  
Dancing and running  
As your journey starts and stops  
And starts again  
As the river carries you  
To this sea of tears  
To the rushing hollow music  
Of wind, of gulls, of waves -  
And everywhere a river  
A river of your songs  
Words so hopeful  
Flowing away to this river of no hope  
The final pull of the tide taking you  
In its arms like a baby. And you,  
Oblivious to its deep brackish depths  
As you float out on a raft of daisies -  
He loves you he loves you not  
He loves you he loves you not -  
What to believe when the river  
Has brought you to this vast water  
And when you can no longer see  
The bottom for the mud in your eyes.

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All the hours we have spent and  
Still this river is pulling you out  
In this mysterious tide,  
And away to your drowning -  
And now, I remain here on shore  
A distant figure, faint in the rising fog  
Watching you drift out  
On wave after wave after wave.

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### DIVORCE COURT

A man and a woman were getting divorced  
The court told them  
Go to mediation  
It will make it easier on your kids  
In the mediation session  
The husband pulled a pistol  
Out of his coat pocket  
And shot his wife  
He got her in the shoulder  
Then his wife pulled a gun  
Out of her pocketbook  
And shot him in the leg  
He ran out to the parking lot  
She followed  
He shot her again  
She tumbled down  
Then the little woman aimed again  
She got him in the groin.  
Ah, where have they gone  
Their first mad honeyed nights?

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### Uncle Andrew's Funeral

You can't sit Shiva [*he whispered*] if you're not a Jew  
You can't cover the mirror in black  
Have cake with relatives and then swiftly sink

Into the deepest part of yourself  
Tear out your insides with your own bare hands  
Release the wail that's grown in your gut

Let it spit out like the black snake that it is  
You can't do that if you're not a Jew  
Damn it [*he hissed*] quit sniveling and grow up

No clawing the coffin at this Protestant church  
Pastor didn't know him but eulogized: loving husband  
Father coach always a helping hand blah blah blah

The wake at the suburban funeral home  
Former white clapboard home on a corner  
The backyard tarred over to a big parking lot

Flower boxes filled with seasonal blooms  
Spring petunias, autumn mums, and winter greens  
Formerly an office – accountant or a dentist's

Now the gaps of missing funds or teeth are filled  
By his heavy casket borne by yawning funeral boys  
Hefting the awkward box on their gray-suited shoulders

Ah shit, [*he said softly*], bring back the screaming and sobbing  
Bring back the tearing of hair and rending of cloth  
The mighty passion of death and loss

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Roaring hearts and roaring sobs  
Crying until breathless, crying until alone  
Breath broken, gasping, trampled under, all undone

Never mind, *[he said]*, it doesn't matter now  
He's shoveled into earth, deep in the dark ground  
"Oh darlin' *[she sang]*, you'll hear our footsteps down there."