

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

Bill Yarrow

PICKING THE BARK OFF EXPERIENCE

As he gets into the oil-soaked tub,
he recognizes the Jupiter Symphony
playing on the floor below.

Any minute now, the waiter will
bring him his lobster omelet.

After breakfast, he dresses and heads
for the blackjack tables. When he
wins a million dollars, he will stop.

He remembers his mother's dead body,
the reunion strippers at the funeral.

Carrying a mimosa in a fluted glass,
he fights my way through the lobby
packed with firefighters from Marietta.

His mind is full of anchors and Bar Harbor.

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STEVIE'S KNEES

They broke both of Stevie's knees.
Gambling debt. Just like in the movies.
Except in real life it's a little more
tearful, a little less marauding.
Aunt Pol didn't see it. She was diabetes
blind by then or dead. I don't remember.
The main thing is to avoid heartache,
but only the frozen know how to do
that. The arteries of time are running
out of blood. The lungs of love are caked
with soot. Stevie's skin was a peerless
jewel undervalued by the college
bourgeois. I've read about the algebra
of need. Stevie's need was arithmetic.

NOTHING BESIDE REMAINS

It was the 70s. My students carried
guns. My colleagues died of AIDS.
My bachelor neighbor was a cineaste.
I walked the rent-controlled boulevards
of Sunnyside and watched the glib sun
set over loquacious Manhattan. Every day's
evaporated apogee had its inky epitaph.
We exist only insofar as we are remembered.
Remember going to Carroll Gardens for fake
IDs? Remember New Year's Eve in LeFrak City?
Remember the coconut kishke from Zabbar's?
Remember the legend of the Ely Avenue Cleaver?
Under the bridges of Kew Gardens Hills
the invented truth still has street value.