

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

Chris Crittenden
Alone Nude

hands through hair,
a grassland of snakes.
tousled fingers
accost the writhe.

he wants
flesh without plunder,
to knead cities of invaders
from his face.

his wrinkles
twist into horrible others:
collage of seraph
and succubi.

old battles
crush scarred wails
of pain-saddled women
and bullet-broken men.

he grits, shudders,
daubs his chest
from a palette of hurt.
slaps a skulking
menagerie.

below nude swells,
manta rays of doubt
cloak mistrust. how many
of his prayers floundered,

sunk into elision?

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Destructive

blooming like a werewolf,
your anguish draws
the long-troubled blade
of my need.

we hug to alloy
in hot lurches,
hip-grinds where memories
strive to negate.

you swallow me
when you scream,
but my tongue is you
when i yell.

we jerk the other
when one of us suffers
a twitch.

our distrust has eroded
into grim fondness,
elegant like moons,
a pas de deux of pain.

we soothe each other's craters
but not the dark sides.
we thrust in casual fever,
scratching repulsion.

Trying To Shovel

snow splits
into harsh nudes
of cubic women
and vomitous men:
a catastrophe of ménage
that lets no angel
break ground.
over and over
aluminum cleaves
like a locked gate;
and yet the hordes
fluff with the fire of
torn goslings;
and don frocks
that shrink until
garish and lewd.
their fake pyrite
butchers the sun,
twists its purpose
to harass and blind.
not even a child
could defeat such
vulgar globs,
sculpt their failure
to uplift a rose.

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Cameo By A Stranger

when someone you love ends,
she becomes your wound.
you open your poisoned mouth
to eulogize her, and wretch.

close years shared well
curdle like an infection.
you imagine yourself
retying the knot:

the feel of the cinch
on the final crane
of your rope-burnt neck.

you crave
that false liberation. to jump.
tense cities of dolls
shunt around your scared grief.

lies of living rubber
are all smiles and pep.
grids without breaking point.
no omega, no *how*.

the agony of your soles,
swaying like stalled
quivering pendulums--
only that exists.

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Rio Scene

dancers slide,
glissandos of fraying grace.

eel-like smiles joust
with pointed laughter.

no distraction
from the vector of the wine,

the inevitable sex.

draculas
consume jezebels.

the dress of Cleopatra
shears into webby lace,

until dawn runs red
through her thirsty servants,

the nude pasticcio
of their hitched and fondled

limbs.