

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/2

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Upon Finding Oneself Lost

This path must be some kind of joke.
Or do I see more than I know?

It leads to nowhere and vanishes
like repeating a phrase unto nonsense

or finding out one's been blind-dating
a statue while running up a tab.

I can find the topo map in my pack
but not the place I'm in on the map.

Silence comes to break the news:
dude, you've been lost for a while.

Weird to say find yourself lost
as if there were only two options,

as if they were versions of each other
so that it makes little difference.

In the ocean one's lost everywhere at once.
In the woods, piecemeal, too much to see.

In life, it happens in terms of time.
The figure ahead may not resemble

the child left behind. And you find
yourself standing in the distance

as if there were some other life
besides the path you're walking by.

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Welcome to a nation of nowhere.
Dear universe, are you this vast?

Even the sleepy trees look alike.
Each one's a stand-up comedian,

silence the punch line. Have they
been watching me circle them?

Pray to the god of panic:
Please don't eat all of me.

Hard core doctrine: the rain
teaches hands to drink fast.

The wind's a cold lover who plucks
with his teeth, each kiss a goose-bump.

One can be cute with oneself only for so long.
Then jokes fall flat. Heart and belly pine.

A bird comes to sing a song:
why didn't you kiss her more?

It's never too late to be lost.
Nor is knowing one's lost

a risk the lost ever take. Lose
to find and willing to lose.

Night changes everything and nothing.
With darkness so thick, who needs eyes?

Stay long enough, who feels lost?
Time to reckon out blessings.

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If you're taking a bath in shadow,
you don't need water or hands.

Silence comes to spread the word:
when drowning, drink the air.

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Craft

I sing a song behind a sign
FIVE ACRES AVAILABLE, tallest
trees in the neighborhood here.

I've crept in off the sidewalk
waiting for a break in the traffic
when no one will see – what does a man

go in these dark woods for - to buy,
to pee, to weep? No sooner in,
the green makes the mall

disappear as if nothing has happened
for a thousand years. Sloping down
slowly past the pine and mulberry,

over the wild rose and thistle,
in silence oaks drink an ancient stream
out of a drain beneath the road.

Hell bound wheels whir above oblivious.
Nor could one guess how this world looks.
I've heard this is where the red fox lives

who visits my yard three miles away.
How he finds passage is a mystery.
One must mime his stealth to enter here.

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Nostalgia for the Future

Amidst the violence, the broken
alliance of man against man,
in the buying and selling of the world,

who does not seek out signs
for what the years might hold
for the earth and all its creatures?

Certain ones are not discerned,
gone the way of star dust
behind a lake and in the sky.

We've worn out the props
of memory now, polishing
up our red-nosed faces.

Lip-sticking nature, we'd lure
ourselves to swallow the bait,
hiding the rusted hook.

The fire road this morning
has that look as if it knows
who will travel on it and why.

Then fog comes traipsing down
from the mountain, an idealist
embracing all. It won't last.

On the other hand, the rate
of the river drunk and rambling
through the valley regards us

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flying over the bridge
as much as the spellbound
trees and rocks hanging on.

Now the clouds act sent for,
mimicking the image
that names them, advent

of days of love and grief
ahead. What has the sky
in store for the grass,

and the earth for us
lords of the earth? I listen
far out into the leaves.

Something flies by,
bird or pebble.
The spell has broken.

Whose name did the wind
carry off into the silence
of the darkening wood?

Sunrise will make clear
today's tomorrow will not
be the red day that comes.

The mountains and brooks
slip out into the changing light,
forgetting their human names.

The old future ahead appears
without a home. My nostalgia's
for the young and not yet born,

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co-mates of unlocked doors,
a community yet to come
of lovers freed from the past.

I pray crickets send them secret
telegraphs through the night
as a new song back of some shed

is whistled out to greet the dawn.
The forecast is in the fields
and forests, streams and skies

where once gods danced
though I know when one looks up,
the clouds don't look back.