

**Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3**

*Chris Crittenden*

**Angel In Goodwill**

her mascara blots in aisles of clothes.  
she sees the people that wore them  
before they were young  
and after they are dead.

cotton sewn by numb girls in grey bunkers.  
leather as creased as widows,  
though it once grazed Eden  
near guavas rain-fed and lush.

there are teeth marks from idiot dogs,  
and scuffs from rough forbidden sex.  
innocence shines in a baby's bonnet  
though the lace reeks of forced labor.

were they naïve and blameless  
as they draped sins over their shoulders  
and walked veiled for years,  
slowly folding away?

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

### Actress Gets Real

fractured wings in prisms of smoke.  
they become the Pacific's glitter,  
sparkles near a methedrine crash.

they become the glamour of costumes.  
cracked stars in love gazes.  
a zoo of vogue-bound romeos  
and gem-lured girls.

she tosses out sprays of half dollars  
to watch beggars dive like pelicans.  
whoredom flashes off rude windshields  
in constipated lanes.

it comes down to polishing your teeth  
and bobbing whitely to get a part:  
all the glitz in tricky mouths,  
the sex dance shine of what-can-i-do-  
for-you shoes.

the world a stage injected,  
like a chem-addled crystal ball,  
or the lying breasts of a cute though despicable diva.  
everyone a shard  
in the mayhem of the failure of the ruse.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

### Lying In Bed

the ceiling knew the curse of sand,  
slithered as he stared back  
and spoke in stony jests.  
it bared or hid its peekaboo runes,  
no peace in the lobotomy,  
salad of gestalts,  
straitjacket of stucco.

febrile ants  
battled germs of a gawking plague.  
and the boiling skullmeal, and the screamless oatmeal,  
spiced from infant to hearse.  
dismembered sins  
latched onto each other  
so none of them could repent  
or even cry.

it was a seduced waltz  
that burst into cobweb roses.  
shreds of petal and mask  
forming scrappy jaws,  
which thrust like wolves:  
everyone eating everything,  
all of them in fact murderers,  
victims and kitchen knives  
trading place.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

### No One To Say

cars wail  
like ghouls yanked into Sheol.  
under the bridge, huddled in dirt,  
it is something you dream.

you want the tobacco tree, rough near your ribs,  
to produce real smoke.  
you want marijuana from the castor bean.  
heroin from the jimson weed.  
but all are bitter  
gut-cinching poisons.

if only the sticky dirt was a gate,  
throw it in the air and you go back--  
to condors, bears, cougars and whales,  
and the Nuwu shaking turtle rattles.

the semi trucks, loud as wilted thunder,  
won't cooperate.  
or the chemicals from tubes in the asses of the vehicles,  
which drizzle through your lungs,  
and pool around mustard weed and ill sumac.  
this arroyo was once frog-chirped,  
swirled by a blizzard of swallows.

but the machines cry out, spears in their stomachs.  
all night the constant  
neverending hearse.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

### Writing Space

fierce stillness  
in a uterine room.  
and a hum from the throb  
of a refrigerator.

all his clothes scattered about  
like chesspieces  
crumpled or broken.

he reaches high from this low place,  
opens his mind as if Deer Woman  
were unbuttoning his shirt.

promises, promises,  
and a slipstream of thrills,  
close and fast  
behind the swerving breath

of time.

and so he sprints.  
the dextrous words accelerate  
to wear him down.

he loves the supple phrases,  
coaxes them, acknowledges his luck,  
how light yet potent they are:

cousins of the purr of swans.

he has no standing to complain;  
and yet the mean room  
goes silent again,

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

as if Deer Woman had said nothing,  
never touched him,  
or believed.