

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

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The Pursuit Of Happiness

The guy sitting next me
at the lunch counter
is wearing a gray hooded sweatshirt
that documents
many of his recent jobs.
There is a bloodstain on the left sleeve,
green paint across his right shoulder,
various shades of grease
in random patterns
on the front and back.

He is slowly sipping black coffee
while spooning the soup of the day
in a mouth with chapped lips.
His hands are calloused,
with knotted finger joints.
He grasps the spoon
like holding a heavy wrench.

A few blocks down the street,
the "Occupy" movement
is shouting slogans
and waving signs.

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Pending Faux Pas

After pleasant introductions
and a brief tour of the auditorium,
I step outside for a cigarette.
There is the scent of a winter wood fire
wafting off in the distance.
It is a moment to gather my courage
and chide myself for doing something
I had promised never to do again.

A long emaciated woman informs me,
"This is No Smoking campus."
She is middle aged and carries
a shopping bag purse
with the requisite plastic bottle of water
stuck securely on the inside edge.
She is planning to live
until the age of 110 or so.

I want to ask her if she is
the campus smoking patrol lady
but instead I ignore her
and walk out across the brown lawn.

I slowly review the order
of my pending presentation
and steel myself for the q and a session.
I make a pact to avoid sarcasm.

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I extinguish the offending cigarette
and head back to the scene of the crime.
There is a line waiting to get in.
I hear the smoking patrol lady
tell her friend that she has both my books
and hopes she can get them autographed.

This all the motivation I need.