

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

Ron Yazinski

On a Scale From One to Ten, How Much Does it Hurt?

Nothing isolates like pain.

Even the catalogue of her afflictions

Is as useless as a list of African countries

When dealing in the marketplace in Tangiers.

So I explain my daughter's condition this way:

She is so ill, that if she committed a major crime,

Like slitting the throat of the insurance agent

Who was angling to swindle her limited benefits;

Or if she ran down the nurse

Who mishandled the infusion that sent her to the hospital,

She would be acquitted of each,

Found not responsible for her actions;

So ill, that giving her every last cent of my savings

Would only help for a little while;

So ill, that as I stare at the ceiling in the middle of the night

I'm glad there is no god to hold liable.

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

The Cherry Tree

After wild spring winds snapped it at the stump,
The ornamental cherry tree lies across the front yard,
Dead, but blossoming one last time
In its customary frenzy of pink and white.

Behind it, on the front porch of the family home,
Four brothers remember the day a half-century ago
When mom chose it for her new house,
And dad, who hated yard work, planted it.

Then they mention the pictures
Most of their kids had taken in front of this tree
When they stopped to see grandma
On their way to the prom;

Then one pulls out his cell phone
With its photo from last year,
Of mom holding her great grandchild
In front of this same tree.

Finally, there is the estate to be settled.
They agree that the tree will have to be removed
Before the house is put on the market.
And how it's a shame the neighborhood has deteriorated;

Then silence, as they realize this is the last time
They will ever feel comfortable here;
And the one from New England says
"Just imagine how sweet that wood will smell when it burns."

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

Mobster In Love

The only real mobster I ever met,
Was a stocky man who looked like he would be
More comfortable in a butcher's apron
Than the expensive suit he was wearing.

He was the friend of a friend of a friend,
Which was how I got to be seated at his table.
All I knew about him was that he owned a number of successful businesses,
And that his name was on several Jesuit buildings and athletic fields.

I had heard many of the rumors connected to him,
Such as he knew where Hoffa was buried,
And that there was an FBI task force
Specifically assigned to put him away:

But the only thing I wanted to ask him
Was whether he actually had a priest bless the opening of his new landfill,
To which he good naturedly smiled.
"Where does a man find a priest to do this?"

"St. Lucia's, in Dunmore," he said,
"The one in Ripley's BELIEVE IT OR NOT,
"Because it's the only Catholic Church without steps,
"Making it easier to get into."

Then he thought for a moment.
"You know, the best piece of ass I ever had
"Was in the cemetery right behind that church.
"It was a year or so ago,

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

"During my granddaughter's Confirmation party in the church basement,
"When this gal and I shared some of my Dago red.
"Then we went out back, right between the tombstones
"Of old man Christiano and his half-wit brother Tonio."

He got a dreamy look in his eyes,
"That woman had the hard body of a goddess."
All the men at the table savored the image,
Until one indiscreetly asked her name.

"Gentlemen don't reveal things like that.
"Besides, if her husband ever found out," he smiled,
"He might take offense,
"And I'd have to do something about it."

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

Lily White

A little woman with a walker waves away
The man that hurries
To open the glass door
For her to enter the bar.

Then she inches her way across the floor,
Before hoisting her bent body onto the stool next to me.
On cue, the bartender,
Sets her whiskey and soda in front of her.

"I told them, Lily, you only need that walker to get home."
And Lily smiles, sips her drink and turns to me,
"I know you're new here,
"But you're in my seat."

I offer to change places with her,
But she declines.
"Who do you think I am, my mother?
"Now that was a woman who would have demanded her rights.

"For twenty years she and her friend had the best seats
"At every high school football game,
"Right on the fifty yard line, in the seventh row,
"Just high enough so the railing didn't block their view.

"Nobody would ever think to take her seat,
"Because everybody in this town saw how elegant she was
"And they respected her for it.
"When she died, I thought I could take her place,

"But her seat was already taken by someone who refused to move."
She took another sip.
"So you keep your seat.
"I can drink just as well here."