

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

*Holly Day*

### **All the Days After**

we fight like suicide bombers, intent  
on destroying everything just  
to make a point. hand-painted dishes from Hong Kong  
figurines of children in lederhosen from Holland  
a collection of German drinking steins  
cascade into an unsalvageable puzzle-piece pile of  
ankles, bonnets, houses with pointed archways  
and heavy silver handles. We wreck

everything within reach  
grind cat food into the Persian rug under  
the weight of our twisting bodies, collect  
skin beneath our fingernails, rip out  
fistfuls of hair  
crunch teeth against bone.

When you're dead, I will forget you.  
I will roll the hand-knotted Persian rug up around your body  
drag you out to the construction site across the street  
hurl you into the dumpster full of broken  
cinder blocks. If you win

I don't give a shit what you do with me.

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### The Weight of Dirt

under the carved stones dotting  
the soft hills spaced every three feet lies a woman  
planting dirt stuck to her dress legs stretched out arms  
crossed resisting still the

inexorable crush of  
decay eyes sewn shut her hair perfectly coiffed  
tied in a small knot behind  
her head eyes still shut unmoving as the shovel tip  
splinters wood

he trusted her so completely but then  
she died he says he leans against the  
handle puts all his weight behind the blade  
uncovers enough of the coffin to open  
the lid flashlight patient over her clothes  
remembers the color of her eyes  
pulls the ring off of her finger

to give to the next wife.

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### Why I Am

my mother reached out with one hand, felt  
my forehead as she passed by.

he has a fever, she announced, glaring at  
my stepfather. he just sat and stared at her from  
the confines of his armchair, dumb  
reluctant to believe that I

wasn't faking this, too. later, at  
the hospital, we found out that  
I had been walking  
around with a ruptured spleen, that I could have died, even.  
my fucking parents  
never believed me when I said I

was sick, and they had nearly killed me. I could be dead right now. this  
is why I need  
you to believe the things  
I tell you. don't argue with  
me. if you're not going  
to play along, you will have to leave.

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### Where We're Going

A famous poet  
moved into the nursing home  
where my sister works. She called me up to tell me about him  
said she recognized

his name from a magazine  
I gave her for the home's lobby. She says he's  
a nice man, that I should come by to meet  
him, give him someone to talk with about poetry.  
Weeks later, she tells me not to come  
the poet has become a problem, he  
cries all the time. "If he'd just take his medication,  
he'd be fine," she sighs. "How can someone so smart

be so dumb?" She says they're going to take  
his computer away because  
all he does is look up Internet  
porn. "It's so sad," she tells me. "I think he's  
trying  
to write something."

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### The End

The problem with having friends older than you is that they don't keep for long. I look up one old friend after another, brilliant poets I used to worship before befriendng, find they're drugged up in nursing homes, or just plain dead. My mother

used to claim the reason so many of my friends were so old was because I needed a grandfather substitute, said someday I'd appreciate the kids my own age. Instead I spent my teen-aged summers listening enrapt to stories about beatniks smoking dope in Mexico, how easy it was to buy pot in "black" clubs how homosexual affairs in the Navy were justified during World War I.

but then my friends started dying, and I'd go to school and try to explain to teachers how sad I was that my friends were all dying, and they thought I was hanging out with suicidal drug addicts they didn't understand that my friends were just old. They'd tell me I should find a different crowd to hang out with, a safer one that I'd probably be happy if I join the literary club, or worked at the school newspaper.

I still don't know what my friends got from hanging out with me except maybe they were just happy to have someone listen to them without being aghast, someone to unburden stories about trying to get an abortion in 1930's Mexico, hallucinating on yellow pot, what it's like to have a tapeworm twisting in your gut when you're on a diet spoiled me for high school and college prattle, and I can only hope that the stories I have when I'm old are half as interesting as the ones they shared with me.