

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

Kevin Ridgeway

You Need to Go Out and Make Whoopee

Draped in her regal moo-moo
she fixates on the
abbreviated young peasant manifestos
screaming from my t-shirt
her peanut brittle mitts
form a death grip around my hand
as the flames of Bonanza engulf
the television screen with a
jarring "Chyaa!"
as we sip from cups
emblazoned with
obscure cartoon characters
from the distant past.
the Chase and Sanborn sawdust
scratches and burns my throat
but she slugs the slop like a champion
"You need to go out and make whoopee"
she repeats over and over again
and laughs herself into a narcotic nap
she's going to die soon
and although I don't get to make "whoopee"
I want these wretched old cups.

The Silent Canon

my high school drama teacher,
with his koala head of hair pointing
in every direction on top of his
monstrous six-foot-five body,
his yellow teeth often drifting
out of his mouth and scraping
his pencil thin mustache,

called me the silent canon,
in reference to my shy demeanor
that evaporated when I hit
the boards of the stage with
loud characters writhing
and screaming at the spot lights

he always cast me as an old man,
I was the only student who could
make a convincing codger,
which irritated me--I was a tall,
dark leading man trapped inside
a blonde headed wire frame
too short and too silent to
protest

I remember his many expressions
in response to my onstage
explosions and offstage implosions
his hand in the air, his untrimmed finger
nails scraping his chin to bleed,
his tonsils dancing
as he howled with laughter

Scenes from the Ant Genocide

she is poisoned by delirium,
the rain of insecticide can
be glimpsed through the
rays of the sun
and a sphere of concrete
surrounding
an empty swimming pool
is boiling,

lightly toasted in the
garage and watching
The View,
I am fixated on the
President's face
grimacing
as the youngest
host spews forth
ignorant statements
and the older hens
hiccupping endless
loops of color
social commentary,
all I can do
while the studio
audiences cackles
and swoons is stare
at a freckle on the
President's cheek
and wonder if it
is a moving ant

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she bursts in my door
and screams
of my lack of toxicity
it's my turn to control
the miniature
population,
the spray fizzling
in my eyes

A Beautiful Death

riding up highway 89
surrounded by the starkness
of trees exploding with
autumnal blessings
red, brown, yellow--
the fury of summer
forgotten as we descend
into the thick of woods
to the orange dance
of bonfires, telling old
stories passed down
like cherished saints
in whispers as the
natural world hits its
final peak before it
withers away in the
white blankets of
winter--this is the time
when childhood is
reborn and the spirit
rises from the ashes
of the sun to light the
torches that lead the
way to the unlocked
passageways of the
imagination that has
hidden in the subconscious
but now as we witness
the great pumpkin
smiles afire in the darkness
of this great mystery,
this beautiful death
paints the spirit in

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templates of beautiful life
and we sip the cider
that makes us drunk
enough to pray for more
and this carnival comes
to town every year
shrouded in glory