

**Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4**

*Ron Yazinski*

**FEAST OF ST. STEPHEN**

Without Christmas, winter might be bearable,  
Without its lies that the warmth of homecoming will displace the cold;

Or its wrappings that brag of the love that families usually begrudge,  
Like the blind Irish bragging of their proud heritage,

A large portion of which is the ability to run away;  
Like family members do once the holidays are quit,

Packing up resentments for another year,  
Like the last sweater stuffed into a suitcase;

The kisses of relief that now they must be going,  
Bloated on stories of painful deliveries and new diseases,

Waving goodbye to white lights like scars on the fronts of houses;  
And the tourniquets of garland on trees;

And the wide red ribbon spiraled around the porch's white columns  
Each like the pole in front of an old-fashioned barber shop,

All attesting that the best that could happen here  
In the ancestral home, is a type of triage.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

### WINTER SOLSTICE

Standing at the picture window,  
Staring at the neighbor's red front door,  
With its wreath of twisted pine boughs

Honoring the ancient longings of a wintry heart;  
And the garland lacing the wrought-iron railings  
On each side of his snowy front steps,

Showing there is nothing to hold onto there;  
And helixes of green and red lights  
Entwining his dwarf, trimmed evergreens,

Celebrating the power to blink the night away;  
We linger near our mistletoe,  
Assuring each other

That the fading year was merely a rehearsal  
For the real show that opens in two weeks,  
Holding hands with fingers crossed.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

### THE NEXT TO LAST RITE

The midlife break is as much a sacrament as the rest.  
When you want to toss a glass of water in the priest's face  
To bring him to his senses,  
And slap the perverted bishop's cheek,

For telling you his sins  
Are for the good of your soul;  
Or rip in half the marriage license  
That vows the next life will be just like this one,

As boring as Saturday cartoons,  
And your heavenly part will be as the laugh track,  
Because the angels have all slit their wings.  
It comes at the moment

You stand naked from the shower,  
Repeating the thoughts of the sagging, wrinkled face in the mirror,  
And you call out, loud enough to scare the dog from the bed,  
And the bear from the bird feeder,

"Fuck it."

And you realize you've practiced this phrase  
All your adult life for this one moment.  
You put your heart into it, and your soul,  
And you will never be the same.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

### PHILADELPHIA ORDINATION

Inside Peter and Paul's Cathedral,  
On this Sunday in May,  
The ordination of young men,  
All so clean and polished like little bisque dolls;  
Or the bas reliefs of the seraphim where the altar has been restored;  
All so earnest, with the desire to touch men's souls,  
Though some will only go so far as the body and be called on it.

In their Easter attire,  
Parents and grandparents fill the pews,  
Called to witness one of their own enlist in God's army.  
Across the street, in a little triangular park,  
Three old women hold a banner begging the bishop to ordain women,  
So that they might join the fight.  
But he knows better.

Farther up the Avenue of the Arts,  
In Pennypacker Park, the statue of General Galusha Pennypacker,  
Astride two tigers, leads his army of Philadelphia homeless into the day.  
There are many more of them than young priests.  
A catholic order, not allowed in the church without a bath and clean clothes.  
Sprawling on the benches, their belongings rolled up on their laps,  
Encamped between the Free Library,  
Where they could learn to accept their conditions,  
And the Church where they could thank god for the virtue of poverty

Instead they point to one of their own  
Wobbling down the avenue,  
His arms carrying plastic bags with all his wealth,  
Behind him, hooked onto an untied shoelace,  
Flops another plastic bag.  
It looks like a tail of a kite, as he heads down the Avenue of the Arts.  
In his own mind he might be flying,

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

An angel in disguise with a message to deliver,  
Either a truce or a challenge,  
But headed in the wrong direction,  
Towards the Art Museum.

**Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4**

**THE BOGEYMAN**

My infant son can hear the phantom's footsteps  
In the thunder behind the door;  
Its sneering laughter  
In the pelting rain upon the window glass.  
And though I press him shaking close to me,  
My hands are not the size of darkness.