

## Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

*Liam Day*

### **Hawk Down**

Icing on stale cake, last night's inch of snow  
covered the sidewalk across the street from the husk  
of the partially wrecked Boston Ice Company depot,  
chipped tooth in the smile of the sun rising behind it.

Chunks of concrete clung to the steel rods  
once its skeletal frame. Next to it, idle now,  
sat the demolition crane, mechanical T-rex,  
pear-shaped ball hanging taut from the boom.

Before people traded their ice boxes for Frigidaires,  
company and assets were, according to  
the New York Times of December 16, 1900,  
rumored to have been acquired for \$2,000,000.

In the snow, forming half an angel  
with the one good wing it swept back and forth,  
a hawk, other wing shorn from its body,  
sat, placid face swiveling at intervals on its neck

at passers-by who stepped into traffic  
to skirt it. It neither sought nor found relief,  
unused, as it must be, to need it. Predator, not prey:  
how easy to believe you will always be.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

### Eyjafjallajökull

Here you take nature where you can find it: new light on steel,  
new light on glass, lichen obscuring deceased's names on  
headstones in the cemetery at the bottom of the hill, even rats, which,  
though their habits aren't all that far removed from chipmunks'  
or squirrels', occupy a lower rung on nature's aesthetic ladder.

I once gave myself a Mohawk with nothing but clippers and  
a hand mirror. On the sides I sheared to the skin and managed  
to turn myself into something akin to a prisoner of war.  
Of course then I weighed all of a buck fifty soaking wet.

I was reminded of this when a skunk moved in under the porch.  
Nature's punk rockers, skunks stink, only emerge at night and wear  
white-striped hair, which they clearly dye themselves in a mirror,  
spiked, but such is the desiccation I'd follow it into its  
squatter's lair with nothing but a flashlight to get a better look.

These things I don't know or can't do: the names of flowers,  
distinguishing one type of deciduous tree from another,  
keeping the difference between a swallow and a sparrow straight.

I once confused slug and sloth in a poem I too hastily submitted  
for publication and the summer I worked as a counselor at a camp  
with a horseback riding ring, I couldn't quite get the cantering down.  
Like a language, if nature isn't learned early, it may never come.

About this I'm sad. I'm well past my sell-by date and a city is  
the only habitat I've ever known. I don't like boats or tents,  
climbing mountains or swimming too far from shore. And as if  
I needed a reminder life's been little more than asphalt and  
bald tires, flights were grounded by a volcano half an ocean away.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

### Mirror Neurons

A woman, played by an actress I don't recognize,  
enters the room of a man played by an actor I do  
in nothing but a nightgown.

This simple, suggestive act

lights the tinder that feeds the memory  
of the night Stephanie,  
whom I would no more recognize today  
than the B-list actress on TV,

entered my bedroom wearing only  
the sheerest lingerie. That was the summer  
the seven of us lived together a mile from campus.  
She was, at 21, a broken soul. I was merely lost.

Now memory and scene reverberate,  
like voices between narrow canyon walls,  
like the images of two mirrors caught  
in the other's reflection and in the reflection

of that reflection and in the reflections  
of all the reflections that recede  
into the polished surfaces. They glint  
like stars in the frozen night, like shards

of a wine glass that slipped from your drunk fingers  
and shattered on the floor.

This is the actress's challenge:  
to play more than someone stealing into

## Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

a new lover's bedchamber.

She must be the woman and not just  
enter the room, but enter it as the woman would.

She must collect the pieces of her broken soul,

glue them together to see how they fit,

then break them again

to know how they were broken.

She must be the pieces and be them

in the throes of desiring

and being desired, in the glow

of what is new.

She was, of course, beautiful

and now that's the headline,

the headline that will become

the based-on-a-true-story bestseller that

will become the movie that will become

the Broadway musical that will become

the film version of the Broadway musical whose

Collector's Edition DVD includes,

among the many other special features,

a making-of documentary.

God forbid it come packaged

in a plain white box. We wouldn't

recognize it, wouldn't recognize us.