

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/2

Joshua Willey

The Still of the Grave

Is it the way we live which requires such language
Or the language we use that demands this life
Because the straight story is out of range now
The down and dirty. Limping along the road
High at the gravel pit. I caught a ray and thought
I'd send it to you, if you didn't abide in the land
Where rays are made. I'm all dried up in autumn
Like Saul Bellow at the dentist's office or
Warming up in the bullpen, crisp oxford shirts

Craig Arnold fell into a volcano when Matt Cain
Threw a perfect game. My Suzuki gets 70
Miles per gallon and I only eat once a day
Frost tipped pines at dawn. A new Walmart
Superstore On South 97. I squint at you but it's
500 miles to the 310 and even California gets dark

Thelonius low on the radio, feet up on an ammo box
I was fucking Ariana at 3 in the morning when I
Heard news of the ambassador's death on the
Edge of the Sahara. She was telling me about a
Bartender's big bed and that he didn't want to see
Her even though he said she had a perfect vagina

My father was on the early flight to Beijing, I drove
Him to the airport in her turbo. The Federal Reserve
Was meeting again. The moon was almost gone and
The first ice of October was topping the alfalfa north of the
Train yards. When I got home everyone was asleep and
I forgave myself of everything and said silent thanks to
All the people I'd never meet and, most of all, to you

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Twentysomething

The radio paints midnight, exploring the pallet
Lights around Kezar, Korean burritos
Indian pizzas. Those girls, the med student
The poet, the bike messenger, still smoking
Just being alive is enough
The traffic is a blessing, the bums
Are here just for our entertainment
We are the center of the universe
And so is the red white and blue
He and she and me and you

Six cylinder saviors swerve the streets
Top shelf supermarkets. Prius girls don't front
My pack's light with Wi-Fi ready info
Don't trak stand on the shingles, singles
Crack night fiery hots if the gingers
Rise up flex and run. Bros
Cry and read too sometimes if surf's
Down cut up on sex and Red Bull
There's projects and projects and then
Dandelion powernap, autonomic brainstorm

Why do we drift so far, your double exposure
On my desktop or your name in my
Inbox. Think you'll pack it in and buy
A pickup. If I see you with the sand
Between your toes, a little salt on
Your shoulders. The stacks where you
Sleep, or weep, at the premier, the
Flash drew you into the foreground
Eventually you came to need so little
Planting trees was all that rang true

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My little family, my few friends were
The size of the world. Attic rooms were
Palaces. The guitar I inherited from mom
A symphony. Even the strangers
Giving thanks in lonely places
Looked like prophets of a paradise
Just around the corner. The air
Was richer in oxygen and water
Ran Eden pure. There was nothing
Left to do but drink and breath

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Light Will Bend

Here there is a carrot
And it lies atop the carved wooden arm
Of the chair my father sat in
When he sang Home on the Range
Long before the Lewinski years

Here there is green gunpowder tea
In a jar for pickled asparagus spears
A volume of Faulkner, a volume of Mansfield
With a bookmark postcard of Jean Michel Basquiat
Tender words from an old lover written on the back

Here there is a bottle of Bourbon bought
With money from the consignment of a relative's raccoon coat
Not needed for heaven's mild winter
And a barn with a truck with a flat tire
Home to a marmot, and a falcon, and the disintegrating condoms of youth

Here there is a dragon shaped lamp from Nepal
Set on a stool my grandfather made
One afternoon, the Giants and the Athletics on the radio
And the ashes of a dog in a cedar box
To be taken to the river when the storm breaks

Here there are paintings by anonymous artists
Leather work gloves hardened with sap
Skate shoes dusted with pollen and
The music stand we painted blue
That night we decided to forgive each other and go to sleep