

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/3

Matthew Allen Hamilton

Huffing

A blue Ford pickup ran a red light,
crushed Amy's bones, white as coral,
into sand, the starburst of an alto,
a haloed tombstone.

I fight not to huff the salt up my nose
and watch her climb out of Venus' ivory belly.
It's the only way I can see Amy alive.

We dive to where the water is cool.
"Do not worry," Amy says.
We enter a glass cave,
a prism refracting the erratic image of God.

Why Snakes Belong in the Wild

She had always wanted to work there
as a handler, the glass enclosure her paradise
at the Los Angeles Zoo. As a child,
she kept purple-tailed lizards in a doll house.
The girls at school made fun of her,
called her queen of the reptiles.
One boy pulled a frog from his pocket
and told her to kiss it like a good fairy princess,
but like a chameleon, she disappeared
up a tree and waited for the bell to ring.
Her true passion was snakes.
Never having any friends,
she moved to the desert after college
and began a collection of rattlers,
corals, mambas, and a gaboon viper
she allowed to curl around her wrist
like a diamond bracelet.
Her trailer was a rainforest,
her sofa a den.
She had moldy carpet,
a pond colored tub
and she never invited guests.
Five days she lay there.
Dark bristles from the bite
like an Indian paintbrush
bloomed red from her ears and nose
while the chrome table at the zoo stood empty.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/3

Smoke Jumper

I do it for the rush.
Jumping out of a DC-3,
the orange earth below
like looking at a satellite image,
the glowing flash burns of cities.

I saw a buck
with flames on his back
jump into a river.
The wind picked up
and his body blew
like a puff of cottonwood seed
across the water.
His hooves sparked
the underbrush on
the other side
and suddenly,
the fire was on me,
a prism of light and heat,
my eyes burning like planets
watching the universe ignite.

Wiccan Suicide

My death will harm no one.
It will be better for me
to live in green spaces
created by moon water,
to find comfort in the law
of the three irrefutable fingers
pointing to the center
of a star bursting
salt circles out of me
like fires burning
life into another galaxy
made of daisies and glacial rock,
a mortuary where I lie
innocently on a merciful table,
the mortician straightening
the decomposing tie around
my neck before he glues
shut my lips, combs my hair.
If only someone loved me
when I was alive.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/3

Camp Fluffy

You may ask
why I did what I did,
after all, I didn't need
the money, having made
billions of dollars legally.

I don't know if I have
an answer to that question.
I suppose I was curious,
I mean, I wanted to see
the greed that created me.
The people I swindled
still have enough money
to buy a small island.
It's not my fault some
of them committed suicide
over pennies smashed
between railroad tracks,
thinking that their luck ran out.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/3

The man whose luck ran out
charges me eight dollars a month
for laundry.

"Mr. Madoff, where's the money?"
he asked me one day,
as I tossed a bocce ball
on the prison green.

I smiled and said,
"Have you not spent
time in the fitness center?"

A guard walked over.
"Do your own fucking laundry," he said
and slung a mix of tan jumpsuits
and Armani underwear on the ground
like a poor man slings fertilizer.

My accusers say
I left a legacy of shame,
but still live like a king.

Grow up nimrods
and appreciate your lousy life.
You are not going to starve.