

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/1

Kurt Cline

MUDSLIDE BLUES

Been through a mudslide
Drank formaldehyde
Committed suicide
Over you

Walk a crippled highway
Dodge a hot-lead ricochet
Ride a bucking bronco in a hurricane
Out past the edge of the ruins

I've got a mouthful of deadly
Nightshade but it doesn't hurt
Feels like my eyeballs are gonna burst
I don't hunger but I thirst

Chasin' that wild stallion over the arroyo
My heart goin' up & down like a yo-yo
I tell you I must be plumb loco
Trying to lasso the wind

So turn me away if you must
But give me back my money first
I know you got it bad but I got it worse
I don't hunger but I thirst

Don't tell me the name of the game
I'll just play it as it lays
& pray to the resurrected Savior
At the edge of the sun & the shade

Traveled so far
Forgot where I was going.
Home? No such thing as home—
Just pistol shots & hoofbeats & hiding, alone.

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/1

Nuthin' there but nowhere—
though a blue & white striped awning flaps in the breeze.
And the hangman at the foot of the gallows inquires:
“Gentlemen, shall we proceed?”

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/1

SAN FRANCISCO POEM (for Joie Cook)

Name the sea roll back under
the waves black on white
on the verandah & pretty soon
the sea anemone a spinning tininess
slipping into the star speck's
amazing tininess
tintinabulating particles
into the amazing
itself a memory bits & pieces of oneself
slipping apart sliding back together
when the waves roll back
white on black into the amazing
becoming of you star specks
& pretty soon as a noose
slipknot black on white
at sundown into
the amazing tininess
becomes longing itself
lounging in bra & panties
down the brain-hole
of the ant realm
the spiderweb as a noose
a real folk tragedy whoever you are
do you know? can you hear?
it's your heart opened up
for love to get in this must be
what I can't—wasn't this—didn't
ask for & in fact voted against
losing ourselves in a whirligig of laughter
want to wish to be with you
razors open Venetian blinds.
I've got every dream.
It's a matter of

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/1

wrestling into tenderness.
That was the sound
somewhere didn't follow
opens up his heart to be with you
whom I can't even entertain the hope of
in the secret reticule
for love to get in. Stairs
going down like a snare drum
losing itself in where I wish I want to
of somewhere did follow
Modigliani of mysteries
held perched in the emptiness
not of our hearts but our
horizon seething over
that reticule of silence.
Can you hear? The snare drum
going down the stairs
losing itself in the higher embrace
for love to get in keeping secret
that most secret of secrets spinning
white on black bubble popping but
keeping secret what I can't.
Everything I ever heard of
losing itself down the stairs
yesterday's a river
flowing under a bridge.
Have you opened your heart enough
for love to get in? you asked me
one afternoon it was just like
old times only now your daughter
was a young woman
with eyes of naked flame
a piecemeal enigma
revealing itself
reassembled

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/1

how she seems
to swim to me
not her but another
in the sound of the ocean outside.
Meeting place: fire escape.
An infinite jigsaw in the dust
fabric of time wrinkle in space.
Science in the wings. It all
came down to itself
but was moving much too rapidly
down cobblestones
in high-heeled shoes
dust in the doorway
an infinite labyrinth
& meanwhile
in the shadows of the eucalyptus
the windowpane of God
blows you a kiss
in the shadow of the silence
in the roar of a supercharged
racing car a rectangular gridwork
compelled by circumstances
beyond our control past-lives
circling in as the sky
a crow-caws thrice
suspended in the mist
just long enough
to become poetry
& all my disintegrating away
began to look pretty ridiculous
on that blurry blurry day
by the ocean where we used to play
each astral plane
connecting multiple levels
& brush off the sand of twenty years ago

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/1

& inquire into my fate. Says, "This situation eventually disappears." But will first find amusing before heading into the tornado's eye.

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/1

DANCE OF THE BURNISHED BRASS BUTTONS

Seaward, without a second glance,
the sun-burnished brass buttons danced. (I WAS
sullenly swollen
like an overturned packing crate,
left too long out in the rain
rather tumescence than train tunnel;
can hardly fit in my band uniform
one minute it's kill me now
thirty-seconds later i'm
swallowing jade saliva
in hopes of restoring hope
before it's too late. a momentary
earthquake shakes the computer-screen.
sassafrass that's what he wanted
to say or perhaps succotash.
either one tender on his tongue
as the soft belly button of the sea
okra perhaps. things
he saw but fleetingly
& didn't always
remember to say goodbye
much less write
a farewell speech
words assuming
another language
tangled in the cypresses
like so many kite-strings.
mumblings of thunderings.

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/1

ocean swollen
up like the pregnant mother
of us all, & the sky streaked
with dive-bombers & parachutists
in striped pajamas. bass drum thumping
the heart beat of the world. & you & i
on that hill. & then only me.

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/1

THE MURDER

I killed you &
You killed me
& you killed me again
Under the forked tree
On the blasted heath

& I charred your bones
& threw your ashes
Into the sea as for me
Well I was never
Heard from again

You died and somebody
Shot me right between the eyes
You love me you hurt me
You heal me you desert me
You find me in the bulrushes

You rub my body with the balm of Gilead
You told me we would always be
Gathered back together
Like mercury
No one ever heard
The contrails swerve
The future innervated

Looks down the twin barrels of a sawed-off 16-gauge
With the realization that this too
No matter how realistic
Is also a dream
Within an unrealistic scene
On the vestiges of memory

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/1

& this time someone
Will drowsily reply to my mumbling mutter
“Yes but that was not it at all”
& I will bob to the ocean surface
Breaking free to
 Red & purple & green
Oxygen again.

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/1

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 22 BLUES

The phone in my hand dissolves
& the thirteen coils
Of the umbilical uroboros tighten
When I hear the news:
After all of the putting off & putting on
To end up back at the beginning again—
Which never seems to end!
Takin' that last train to Timbuktu—
Got my ticket stub in hand
It'll be a good long time
Before it comes again
Serpent's tale wrapped 'round
Wheatfield burning nightbird
Skimming the swamp disconsolate heart
Moving place to place
Driven far from home by hope
& fear & economic circumstance
Is today already Wednesday?

Practicin' t be dead
Sweatin' in my bed
Police in my head

& so the minutes slowly drain away
but why
i wanna know why
do they have to come & go
in such a darned fool way?