

## Wilderness House Literary Review 9/1

*Ryan Bayless*  
**The Edge**

I know a place where the trees lean  
and bend over.  
Their trunks are strong and rooted well,  
holding invisible underground.  
They grip the hidden sand and rock  
with an age impossible to tell  
until you cut them down and count their rings.  
But anyone can see that they're still quite young  
with thin branches reaching out and over  
the edge of the cliff where they live like that.  
On the edge  
and bending over,  
like a diver might do before the jump,  
or like I do sometimes if someone holds my feet down,  
but those trees live like that all the time.  
The wind up there is fierce too and cuts through  
the leaves that must be scared to death every time it happens.  
They probably don't know about roots up there  
in midair, in the wind.

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### The Garden

Planting seeds today,  
the dirt around her fingers

and the weeds pulled  
and carefully separated from the rocks

made a difference somehow  
in how she looked at me

when I asked  
if she needed any help.

She didn't say no.  
She didn't say yes.

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### Spring Cleaning

I have finished wiping counters,  
sweeping wooden floors,  
brushing away dust in high places  
no one sees but me.

I've put dishes in the cupboard,  
stacked endless cans of food.  
I've washed my clothes, all of them.  
Tomorrow I can wear anything I want.

I've rearranged my closets  
to make more sense.  
I've found things I forgot  
in the backs of drawers.

I've mowed down grass,  
chasing toads into ditches.  
Pulling weeds is no use,  
my yard is full of them.

I have taken out the garbage,  
separating good from bad.  
Not there, put it here.  
I'm told it can be used again.

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### The Seasons

In the spring, my heart  
opens like the mouth  
of a baby bird  
waiting for a worm.

In summer, my eyes  
cannot look away  
from the glorious  
white stare of the sun.

In fall, I listen  
to the secret of  
the wind. It whispers  
*none of us will die.*

And in the winter,  
I stand in the snow  
and remember how  
I once starved to death.

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### What Clouds Do To Mountains

A cloud moves over a mountain  
Just as  
A mountain moves over a cloud.  
It is the cloud that makes the mountain  
Move over a cloud  
That makes a mountain  
Move.