

## Wilderness House Literary Review 9/3

*Cristine A. Gruber*

### **Betrayal**

Arthritic and frail, bent,  
a shuffling mass of cracking limbs  
creating a living dirge of creaks and pops.

Betrayed by one's bones,  
deceived and misled  
by the vibrancy of youth,  
so very fickle, fleeting,  
like a dishonest mistress  
with her eye set on another prize,  
for the vitality of youth  
has no intention of fidelity  
once the back starts to hunch  
and the knuckles swell and curl.

Vivacity has gone the way  
of the unfaithful paramour,  
leaving one to wonder...  
what could have been done differently  
to keep the love alive in one's own body.

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### Fleeting

Church bells chime  
in the distance,  
faint but continuous;  
real or imagined,  
I couldn't say,  
my senses off  
as I alight  
among stone.

The plot clean,  
adorned  
with fresh flowers,  
marble new,  
unstained,  
unholy date  
chiseled deep,  
not worn.

I rest upon  
the warm earth,  
one hand laid  
across your name,  
fingers splayed  
to cover the date---  
so wrong  
to have lived  
so short a time.

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### 42 Days Since the Death of His Wife

The lonely one visits,  
pulled from his solitude.

I offer him tea,  
herbal balm in an open wound.

Refusing the tea, he accepts a beer,  
cold comfort mixed with warm memories.

Staring out the window,  
he drinks decisively,

cursing and growling  
at no one in particular.