

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/3

dan jacoby

medicine men

faded green wooden benches
held with swirling wrought iron
there blood and bone sat
eyes sharp sun filled
long they sang
since eighteen and seventy-two
immigrants all, pioneers
farmers, wrights, and smiths
in july heat and december cold
proffered copperheads and unionist
survived depression and two world wars
even as the sun set
nothing in life escaped them
remembered everything
even stuff made up
knowing next day would come
until it didn't

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Neal Trouball

captured in 1863
held in prison camp
just above Vicksburg
was winter grey,
cold, but they fed him

for exercise sent prisoners
out on the mississippi ice
never out of rifle range
boys good shots
how fast can you run on ice

prisoners exercised kicking
wound ball of store twine
would always flounder and fall
guards laughed uncontrollable
his inability to stay upright

skates provided more amusement
his falls legendary
each day ventured further out
would crawl back fifty yards on
hands and bleeding knees, a joke

march second eighteen hundred sixty three
warm southern winds roared north
went out again floundering
now a bit farther
screaming in pain, flailing

of a sudden was upright
from fool to agile
from under his ragged blue coat

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a sail fashioned from bedclothes
captors too dumbstruck to shoot

sits here now age one hundred three
told to a six year old
made sixty miles the first day
was late that year for spring plowing
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Blackthorn

sacred staff of faery
bears white fragile blossoms
hints at spring
fruit jealously guarded most
bloom that disappears
when picked

taking this flower
puts one in peril,
borne the claws
and razor teeth
of angry forest fay

with memories
deep as graves
have one looking
under beds
on grave lantern nights
for snares of wild compulsion
feverous fixations
crowding to edge of reason

hip boot hipster

frost this morning
forms on the brittle bones
of summer's numb weeds
passing on to winter

an old flower child
turned hipster fires
up a reluctant atv
dogs bark impatiently
at his slow old pace as he
throws a decoy canvas
bag aboard

glass eyes stare blindly,
weighted with tradition
for the last hundred and fifty years
he imagines the beat of strong wings
high balling it to the east
like the defunct litchfield and carrollton
to the dun lands of the prairie-

this huckleberry coaxes the vehicle
to where dreams and ancient tales
were born