

Wilderness House Literary Review 12/3

Charles Kell
Glass Skin

A man in prison talks steel
tombs that rise from
the ground and engulf us all.

He says it's a living
dream. Like the lake over
there—he points—beyond

the steel fence. I see it, he
says, yet know it's not real.
Trick of light & sand.

Like the man who walks
along the pole. Or how
you & I don't exist even

though we see our out-
lines now. Glass ghosts.
He walks away. I forget

his name, face, why he
is here. Can only recall
the last thing he said:

you can't breathe and the
walls close in on you
and whatever crime you did

radiates in waves on
the inside of your eyes,
even when they're closed.

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The steel tombs are real,
and they're here—and we're
inside without knowing.

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False Marker

You have no
reason to stay
here, listening

to wind splinter
the glass, knock
iron hinges

against a door.
No call to sit
stone still,

accusing me
of what we
both know to

be true. My
hands are oil.
The book you

hold is a dry
match. You could
start this fire.

Light each border's
edge, though
tomorrow what

stays & what
disappears
will not change.

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Paint tears blue.

Full of fear,
waiting, out-

line of shadow,
you in dark-
ness. Black cloth

takes away our breath

I'm Your Ghost

stick painted white, each
swift hover over floor-
board, swish of a bed-
room sheet against the banister.

Flicking your old skin
caught in heat grates, strands
of hair tucked between leaves
of books. Your child-

hood home is gone. The bed-
room with the secret notes
you wrote to a loved one.
The bike path adjacent

to your cul-de-sac. Little creek
out back where you leaned
dry sticks. I hear your whisper,
feel time slip. When

you're alone, when wind quivers
in the hall's air. When you
think you hear the phone
yet its box stays empty. When

the sink drip suddenly stops.
Your gods were always made
of ice. The wheel you thought
you were turning was always

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broken. Drop ceiling. Hirsute
oubliette. Sea glass dust-covered
in your mother's kitchen
cabinet. See my little neat boxes

catching your life's work. Hear
my father's teeth rattle on a string.
When you have grown tired
of looking in this old photo album.

When you have nothing left to do. Boo.