

Wilderness House Literary Review 13/3

Francine Witte

When Daddy walks out on us,

HE LEAVES THE TELEVISION BLARING. Sister goes to turn it off, but Mother tells her, leave it be.

Sister and me, we try to do homework. Fractions and maps, periodic table. We can't think above the racket. Mother tells us, shush, it will take time.

Time goes by, and we are leaving for college. Sister and me on the front porch. Bags all packed. Inside, Mother sits by the TV set that has been blaring day and night. Her ears are stuffed with cotton. She hasn't combed her hair.

We gave up trying to reason. You'll understand when you're older, is all our mother would say.

Now, we are older. Our whole Daddy gone. Our mother down to a fraction. We managed somehow with our homework. Memorized elements, learned how to read a map.

Through the window, only the TV and my mother's arm, one sixteenth of her.

Sister has to pull me to the cab that is waiting for us at the curb, what with me staring back at that window, unable to turn it off.

