

Wilderness House Literary Review 14/2

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On Your Drive to Dexter St.

You Remember...

Grandpa Victor telling you that possibilities are like Poland.

That he said this because just like the realm of possibility has borders that shrink with age, he'd lived to see the borders of Poland be divided and divested, a broken wishbone of a nation.

That for his post-war therapy he could take up basket weaving or acting.

The wicker baskets that hung from his shelves and the acting trophies that didn't.

That as a lazing child you envied him for being an invalid, believing his inability to work was a freedom from it.

That he always quoted what Joe Louis said when asked if he could take Muhammad Ali in his prime: "If I catch 'im, he go down."

That for him, the highest point of Polish heroism was blaring Chopin from the radio towers till the Nazis came. That he said this was all any of us could have done.

That your greatest fear then wasn't the death of your body, soul, or memory, but that when you grew old, someone would partition your possibilities.

You Don't Remember...

That the gray-haired lady you met today wouldn't give you back your car keys to let you leave this strange house.

That she wouldn't let you get back home to your parents even when you begged her and told her you'd pay her all you could.

That neither you nor your parents have lived on 1667 Dexter St. for the last four decades.

That you couldn't tell why her eyes teared up when all you did was ask for her name.

That she wouldn't stop crying and shouting at you until you pretended to swallow the green tablet she gave you with your tea. And that someone ought to give you an award for your performance.

How you took back your keys from the wicker basket the woman kept them in.

How you could take them because she had fallen asleep in her rocking chair watching a movie you thought you'd seen before, something about Welsh coal miners with a question for a title.

How in the dark of her room you could make out a glinting light on her ring finger and wondered where her husband was.

That as you walked out the front door, you saw a crudely scrawled note taped to the inside of it that read "THIS IS HOME."

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The thought that this should be obvious enough to whoever lived there.

You Think About...

The buzzing piece of plastic in your coat pocket emitting a digital rendition of Chopin's military polonaise.

The fact that "polonaise" is the French word for "Polish" and so it only has the slightest link to anything you could mistake for home.

How you always thought that the phrase "how green was my valley then" had a question mark at the end.

How the conditional "if" in "if I catch 'im" makes it sound like he could catch him any minute now.

How that conditional "if" gets less and less conditional with every fugitive mile you drive.