

Wilderness House Literary Review 16/3

Charles Hayes
By The Sea

Arching its neck over the undulating highway to feed from the other side, an orange dinosaur fittingly forms a gateway for my passing, a secret portal to new things in a world of vivid color. In awe of this unexpected find, I smile and look aside at the jungle flashing by. Along its face smiling heads of scaly creatures look out to welcome me. Huge friendly eyes, shaded by leathery furrowed brows, seem to say, "What took you so long?"

Turning to Bill to share my joy, I exclaim, "After all the looking, I have finally found it!" Bill is undisturbed to part from his muse and turn his mask of calm my way. Simply meeting my eyes, he knows, yet he needs not say. Turning back to his muse and calmly tooling the little VW through the herds of prehistory, Bill drives on.

In the back seat Rocky laughs and says, "Danny tried to set me on fire." Looking back between the seats, I see that Danny has lit a cigarette, its blood red swirls of smoke flashing tracers from the rear window sunbeams. Immune to Rocky's claim, Danny returns my look and shrugs. Rocky immediately forgets his outcry but likes the attention anyway. Scrunched together, excitement in their eyes, like Bill, they are watching. I watch too. And together, the miles suck us in.



For a moment the late autumn sea leaves me a child standing in the middle of an empty slate dump, grey expanses running to steep hills of leafless timber. Then, I am here again, as slate grey seas kiss a cumulus scattered sky.

Danny squeals and dances in the surf while I and others sit in the sand, our sneakers wet by his dance's reach. Suddenly across the tableau of what seemed untouchable for so long, a string of pretty girls parade, all enjoying the ancient interest of our smiles, yet bemused by them a stitch.

Wildwood by the Sea blesses our short stay as another portal begins to close. Still whooping and high kicking the curled white froth, Danny does not see. Grinning at this sight, like a silent monk, I wait. It will not be long now.