

## Wilderness House Literary Review 18/2

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### Local Boy

*(Hiding out from the Police and Taking Nature Photography in the Hills)*

OVERCAST. SATURNINE.

The forest worlds are then a damp grey if grey could be named damp. There is a place wonderful, whimsical, where the woodlands go far and far, where off the main trails are labyrinthine paths hardly discernible and full of feral fern and chaga mushroom upon birch, and in the warmest weather are dragonflies, snakes, frogs, strange spiders doing their thing, and other, many other. I know even an old graveyard, maybe trope, for that is what a spirit even called it believe it or not, but if you see it, it is both ancient and new, for you are witnessing it for the first time. One thousand things are around there. Poems, pictures, stories of all sorts, and they are all true. Mise en scene enough to fill the sketchbook or camera roll, the notepad or mind. And it was the early stages of Covid, the towns and their rural atmospheres that lived beyond cities scrambling, trying to make up rules and protocols as they went along, yet everything changing seemingly by the week and sometimes even by the day. Nobody was allowed to enter those forests then, and there was that requisite yellow tape plus signs everywhere. Word was that if caught one would be issued a seven hundred dollar fine, while some said a nine hundred dollar fine. Either way, I didn't want to find out. But, having surveyed the scene I began to think, - There is nobody here. If I go in, and do my thing, which consisted of nature walking and photography, and then left, I would go unseen and unknown. It was odd that they didn't want public gathering, when it was a place if there was any place, where souls could spread out.

*So I parked at the end of the long and lonesome public road, a road that started as pavement and then turned to dirt, and went in.*

*Then I had a marvelous, almost mystical time as per usual.*

*Then again the next day.*

*And yet again a few days later.*

*The world was a sucker, and I was the only smart one.*

*Until that day I ran into a bit of trouble.*

I had been in there about two hours and as I treaded a path outwards, I saw the white of an SUV, and then the lights red white and blue, plus another SUV. Two regional police vehicles had boxed in my vehicle, which was a blue SUV, and were looking with flashlights in my windows. I knew right away it was their day to police that area and issue the fines for trespassers. I sighed and ceased and thought quickly. They had been waiting for me and I didn't think I'd get a warning, because there was nobody else around and what would they tell their SGT. they had been doing all day?

*Hmm.*

*Think.*

*Calm a bit.*

*Pause.*

They didn't know the forest as I did. This much I knew for certain. And they hadn't seen me. I had seen them first. I had nothing 'bad' in my

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vehicle, seen or unseen, so maybe since it was four o'clock I could wait them out. Perhaps their shift ended at five. Maybe they passed on their duties to another set of cops though? That wouldn't be good. But, then I wondered.... - maybe it even began at three and ended at ten, eleven, or twelve. Yes if the shift began at say, three, it could go for many hours more and how would I stay that long hidden in the forest, especially since Mr. and Mrs., Coyote and their friends, plus who knows who else, comes out in the nocturnal whiles...

Doubling back and going left and up, I knew the way that led to an impossibly large hill, that to me was like a mountain, and atop, it had a plateau that stretched its length, a plain like some unique airborne causeway. On the sides I was almost level with the tree lines. A group of wild turkeys moved and then flew away, birds that can fly faster and swifter than you'd imagine if you hadn't seen them. I stood for a while in the middle of the top of the hill. There were a few rocks where someone had lit a fire at some point. There was also a large building stone with the three openings in it, a foundation stone, and I sat on it and took a rest, tearing off a piece of bread from my beige Carhart vest pocket and eating it.

When you don't eat for a while the smallest morsel tastes well. I could chew that and my situation over.

I looked at the sky, at its opacity rather, and though I'd like to relate about some wonderful constellations coming out, or the moon and sun living in the air together like they sometimes are, or eagle as an omen or hawk like a vision, there was nothing.

But I had to keep busy, so I began taking some nature photography. Rain washed stones from almost any angle look interesting, - their green, otherwise prosaic, looking then like aventurine or forest agate, the yellow I don't think is jasper, looking like jasper, and the most basic stones, generic and black or brown or grey, seem to show capillaries, interesting lines that try to speak or say something about the universe.

In their own way anyways...

And the reeds brown, alive, kind, caught by some invisible wind like an astral spirit, all bending over together. A tree branch somehow, blown their by the wind in some night storm, evergreen, and look at the little parts, how they are plenty and think...nobody has seen them or ever will. The more I looked, the more I saw. A living wildflower purple, there beyond its season, against reason and logic, but denoting soul and staying-power. The way the hill slants down differently here than there. And the feeling, esoteric and crazy-sounding as it may be, that each direction and area contains a kind of energetic vibration or spirit a little different than the others,- the furthest one, northern, where nobody goes, seeming the purest and most magical of them all.

*Nature.*  
*Different.*  
*Rugged.*  
*Dark and light at once.*  
*Hopeful?*

Sometimes I would leave my knapsack and venture southward down

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the hill to see if the police had left.

They hadn't.

Each of the four or five times I did this, they were still there, standing talking, and looking around, waiting for me. They had left their lights on also. Though a seasoned hiker in my own right, I was getting a little tired and wished for home, for being in my vehicle, listening to my music, knowing I was on the way back for the day to the abode of books and writing, of warmth, quietude and all things soulful and meditative.

*And it was raining a bit. More a mist, but still.*

*Damp clothing.*

*Damp spirits.*

I thought of a plan. It would be difficult going, a journey through what as almost a marshland, but if I could make it, slowly and carefully, I would come out where there was a rise on the road hiding me from the police. They would not see, if even staring intently by chance, in that direction, that I had come out of the forest. Then, I could walk casually towards them as if I was never in the prohibited forest at all, but just on a legal stroll down the road to its edge.

And that's what I did.

The lands I went though were thick with chaparral and shrub, trees that I doubt have ever been seen by other human eyes, - and odd sounds that would come out from the distance in almost all directions. One time near there I had stopped to take pictures and noticed two coyotes that had been following me. One looked at the other and they dispersed back into the brush and bush like a dream remnant. I admired though, how camouflaged they were, and agile, more a part of the environment than something moving IN the environment.

*You are alone then.*

*If you fall nobody will find you.*

*There is a fear, but also a thrill.*

*Alive.*

An energetic vibration in the marrow that has something to do with the kundalini energy.

Soon, with muddy boots and a small gash on my hand from a thorn bush, I entered the road. I shook off my clothing, taking the Carhart off, folding it for it was covered in something that proved I was forest bound, - some film of dirt or bark or thick air'd bits of greenery. I folded it, put it under my arm to carry but not conceal it, and just then adorned in only my sweatshirt and cargo pants.

As soon as I got over the rise I walked towards Johnny Law and his friend, the other Johnny Law, calmly and stoically. They looked up and locked eyes on me. My whole demeanor was going to be, as if I had a sign in my spirit,-

*---hello how are you I am just going for a walk what is up my friend how can I help you is everything all right yes I am all right and so calm and above-board-on-the-level see you can see that in me now see see see-----*

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They speak first. Now I don't hate them like many people I've known, and I don't like them either. I am kind of luke warm. They are like a type of music that I just don't entertain or think about.

*No harm.*

*Is this your vehicle?*

*Yes.*

*And were you in there, in that forest?*

*No.*

*Where were you then?*

*I was just walking along the road, going for a walk.*

There is a long silence. The leader is deciding if he likes me or not, but hasn't yet. This could all go either way still.

I choose to continue.

*Ya I parked there to walk in the forest, but saw the signs, and I had come all this way, so decided to get some air anyhow, and just walk carefully along the roads before going home...*

*And you didn't go into the woods?*

*No. Definitely not. I saw the signs and obeyed them. I didn't and wouldn't and wont. I can park there I figured, right...parking is okay there, so I just wanted to get some steps since I drove out here already.*

There is a shift in energy. He has accepted this. I guess I have lied well. He wants to chat a bit longer. The cop with the other truck knows there will be no trouble and no ticket as his boy relaxed ever so slightly and he steps back one step and glances down at his shoe. He knows the rest of the talk, whatever it is, means nothing one way or the other, the leader-guy having made the decision that I am okay. They don't 'like me for the suspect' any longer. Main cop says,

*You are a local boy?*

*Sort of. Not born and bred, but I have lived around here for over ten years. I love it here.*

*This is the first thing I have told them that is truthful.*

Well, we are here because nobody can be in the forests. It constitutes social gathering. And right now that is not allowed.

Of course. I figured. No problem. I am not going to come back till this is all over. I don't want to spend the gas money. And it can be a bit dangerous walking the sides of the roads. I am just going to find places closer to home, though they are not as rugged and big, they will have to do.

*Okay. You can go. Take care.*

*Thanks.*

*They begin to talk about something else.*

I calmly hop in my vehicle. I am blocked still but know they will notice somehow. I wait for this a few moments instead of asking them to move. One of them remembers I am blocked in and moves his. I nod and wave thanks. I proceed slowly, with seatbelt and signal and probably better than anyone in the middle of an actual driving test.

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*They stay.  
I have made it.*

It's a few minutes' drive out, the road so long, and I glance then to the right, where I have come from, and the sun has almost gone down, setting to slumber like a neon beet somewhere in a secretly sewn pocket in the earth. I can see the branches that block the lands, and I know that deer hide there sometimes. The branches are almost barren then and crisscross themselves thousands of times. It makes for a weird feeling, a mystery I can't quite put my mind around. It's alluring and it repels at the exact same time. There is something there that is not bad but not good, - an intense and pure energetic feeling, an ISNESS. It's hard to know with thought. It's Gnostic, unorthodox, spiritual. It almost tells you something but you can't quite make it out. There is a secret on its lips. The lips of the land. I want to know its secret. My peers and their ambition I am not interested in whatsoever.

*No- there is something better, more important, in the wild-wild-woodlands.  
I keep going back.  
Listening and learning and watching.  
Ya I keep going back.  
I keep going.  
I guess I am becoming more of a local boy than not.*