

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

*M Tesauro*

**Recreation, 1969**

Nicky, Big Herb and me crept into this batty old woman's house from the backyard. Big Herb popped the clasp of the screen and laid it to the grass. He slid up the window with his banana fingers. Nicky said we had to be smooth. Treat this like a first date. Don't get to grabby, let your fingers play the music. Get quiet, hissed Big Herb. But Nicky goes on and said the bitch was deaf as concrete. Her jewelry would be a quick and easy snatch.

We snuck in the kitchen. Nicky said the broad's mind got spoiled after she put her kids and husband in the earth. A lot of tombstones in that plot. Nicky says a lot of things. He's the funny guy. Haha guy. Big Herb never said much to us most of the time. To anyone really. He was a hand talker and a nodding guy too. You could get it all out of him, just no words. Never real words.

So Big Herb pointed at a room. This was for us to see about. It had an ace ball blue door. Too pretty for Big Herb. He didn't fuck around with these sissy-type doors. He's gonna check the door next to ours.

Our room was unlocked. We tip-toed in. It was filled with old shit from her dead kids yesterdays. Nicky found a horn and blew and we laughed when dust shot out. I said the thing looked like a crazy dick and it came dust. Nicky said haha. We snuck around some more, poking this and rubbing that.

There was a big noise one room over. I stood like a graveyard. We held our breath.

It sounded like a fence post got pounded into the wet, quiet ground. Thump, thump, again thump. Nicky bit his lip like a sissy. Big Herb burst into our spot out holding a wood cane. Blood all on his hands. Where was that from? He never walked with no limp. Whose blood this, said Nicky. Big Herb pushed him toward the door. Quit that stare, he said. Let's get, he said. He shoved me too and we sprinted to the outside through the kitchen window. I tripped. Nicky pulled me up. His teeth shone in the moon. We were all scared wild.

When he hit a hard, fast run, our tongues flapped around like street dogs in wind.

Us three ducked behind a steaming trash bin. This isn't what you said we was gonna do, I said to Big Herb. He was silent. Just a big man full of nothings. Nicky held his loot close to his heart. That damn horn. God-damn, he said, we gotta get. So we raced off, dried dust in our hair.

Nicky and me were only sprouts. I had barely gotten my first lip hairs. Nicky wanted to blow for a jazz band. Even with that dumb brass horn, it was better than life in a cage. Jail couldn't be our thing just yet. Maybe when we was tough. Big Herb had been once and twice before. He said they'd kill kids like me in the big playpen. Cut me up like it was recreation time.

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Us two split our ways at the next street corner. Nicky hit North Avenue with a second wind, all crazy legs at a thousand miles an hour. I broke down Fanchon Street. I looked back and there was Big Herb. He stayed put. The old lady's blood getting all everywhere on him. He sat criss-cross applesauce.