

## Wilderness House Literary Review 11/1

Rebecca Simons  
**The Daily Grind**

**S**he wants movement, freedom, escape – to feel the smooth surface of the brand-new pavement fly beneath her feet. But, she can't. It's like someone has taken a giant drill and fastened her feet to the core of the earth. She tries to look, to see. But all she can see is nothing. Breath comes short and hard as she fights the sense of vertigo that would tip those very feet that were anchored to the ground and flip them into the sky. She closes her eyes and ignores the grit peppering her face and concentrates. *I'm not going mad. I'm not going mad. It was here. I know it. I'm not going mad.* A voice close to her left shoulder asks *Are you alright?* Her heart stops beating to free-fall beyond the spot where her feet are firmly fastened. She concentrates on breathing – in, then out. Apologetic pressure gently applies itself to her shoulder as the voice repeats, *I'm sorry, Miss, but are you OK? It's just, well, you've been stood here a while now.* She focuses on this new anchor and nods – her breath steady, but forced. The voice says, *does that mean, yes? You sure?* On the in-breath she opens her eyes. In front of her, just on the edge of the brand-new footpath a hurricane fence outlines a perfectly flat area. The surface of this encapsulated area is covered in fist-sized pieces of stone – their raw edges throwing odd shadows. She turns her head. The voice is wearing the usual high-vis jacket, hard-hat and film of dust that once was her city. His eyes are kind though, blue like a mild summer's day. She smiles, a movement that doesn't meet her eyes, and says, *I used to work here.*