

## Wilderness House Literary Review 18/4

Emma Krall  
**aging backwards**

hush, child, and try to think of adulthood as encompassing youth—  
it grows over the knobs and burls formed on the names carved into the  
bark,  
and the skin, calloused from tumbling over sprightly joints during capture  
the flag.

why must you crave nonlinear youth? *aging backwards*  
a life in which you could forever skin your knees in careless wonder?  
where you could mix booze into apple juice and full fat cream into coffee?

*oh, to be born in a hospital bed with creaking bones and unfounded wisdom!  
fully equipped with memories that slowly fade away into simple perception—  
i want to die as a bean with chromosomes, encased by a squishy-safe womb!*

*my early days would hold front porches and big beds and unspoken codes of deco-  
rum,  
my chastity would never be contemplated as my sins would lie proud and open on  
the table,  
inside jokes of taxes and bathroom floors and sad smiles would reach to me in  
darkness,*

*my teenage years would come when i cash in my roth IRAs for a future that lies  
behind me,  
migraines would start slow then eat me in one bite—i'd use 'the good stuff' from  
my last surgery,  
in which they would take out my appendix which would, in fact, be bursting with  
fingernails.*

*at thirty, i would get the back problems they'd warn me of when i grew smaller,  
slouchier.  
my days would be bookended with empty calories, sticky pills, and coffee to wash  
it all down.  
each insufferable night would be spent muttering 'Sad Steps' to my cats until the  
sun comes up.*

## Wilderness House Literary Review 18/4

but my guardians' arms would remain open, even in the underground—  
*because even in this world, adults would get to make their own bedtimes.*  
*i wonder if perhaps that is why they are always so tired in real life...*

*rise from that bed, child, and break up your scar tissue in the places that cut deep,*  
*build yourself safe havens out of soft fur and fleshy blankets and gleaming trinkets,*  
*and savor those years as a bright red lozenge: sweet, ever-dwindling, yours for now.*