

## Wilderness House Literary Review 20/4

*C Crow*

### **Aubade for the Last Hot Shower Before the Power Goes Out**

You taught me to sit in the dark  
Turn off the radio, listen to the engine

Two song minimum just to make up  
For these new cars' fuel efficiency

Net negative carbon emission  
Fossil fuel archeological dig site  
Carbon monoxide garage practice

Sun's getting real low behind the pines  
They haven't learned how to die quite yet  
Damn evergreens, take a lesson from the stars  
They died a long time ago, but like us  
They're still shining long after their extinction

If the world is gonna end, why bother going vegan?  
You're in the house eating a tofu dog  
With Whataburger brand spicy ketchup  
Free-range, grass-fed, GMO-free, certified organic  
Thirty-two Mexican immigrants died on that tomato farm

So don't hold back when you feel the need to burp  
There's an entire nation where sheep outnumber men

Order uber eats. Leave a big tip. Ruin your credit score

Nix the long winter nights—we're all summer all the time  
Either that means we're Beach bods all year round  
Or we accept ourselves for the baked potatoes we are

Your belly superimposed upon a body pillow  
When it's too hot to sleep with a blanket  
I want you to have something to cuddle

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Is it already morning? The sun and clouds shimmer  
In oily puddles like the pale, golden stain your head  
Leaves on a weeks unwashed pillow case

This is a compliment these stinks and stains

When ultraviolet rays break down so much of us  
Something will remain of us even if we destroy the world together  
You deserve to feel sweaty palms on sweaty palms

The kind of Two-Maidens-Pompei-corpse-love  
Generations of historians will debate

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### Exalted Acedia

Morning sunbeam through dirty windows  
A single tendril of ivy crawling up and through  
After we pushed out the screen

Sometimes, a leopard gecko

Is it wrong if I help him squeeze between the glass  
Even if I know it means he will die trapped and dessicated  
Some forgotten corner I have not cleaned since I moved in

There will always be places  
Where the light cannot reach

The dust of our bodies will still be there  
It gilds the cobwebs and corpses

I will pretend this is still a kind of stardust

Because a single mother on Facebook told me it was so

Is it not enough to want to be something more than tired and alone?  
Deficient in verisimilitude, not vitamins, yet the result is so very much the  
same, is it not?

Exalted acedia, religion of my own body  
The bed, the sheets stale with sweat, the altar  
Have you ever seen how our face imprints  
Upon a pillow after many sleepless nights?

This too is a kind of heiligenschein, a kind of sainthood

At seven p.m. on a Thursday, I pull into the coffee shop drive through  
on my way to a sleep study at the hospital; this is the third time I have  
done this, bound to a bed of starchy, sterile sheets by tubes and wires. The  
nurse's gentle hands will press something like a ventilator to my lips; I am

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told it will measure the pressure of breath in my throat, how the vacillations of my own flesh work to suffocate me while I sleep

In the coffee shop drive-thru, a man without a mask  
Accepts handful of crinkled, sweat-stained bills from a stranger  
Yesterday, a seventy-year-old man died with a ventilator in his throat  
A sign in the grocery store offers flu shots for \$13.99  
The plague did not pass over us because of sheep's blood  
Painted over our doorframes; no, we invited it into our house  
And like a millennial vampire, it has lived with us ever since

I can't sleep, so I lie awake at night and count imaginary stars  
In the spackle of the ceiling; sometimes, a single spider  
Throws off my count, so I start over and over again

On the window glass, cold in the autumn morning  
I catch a leopard gecko between my fingers  
He scuttles into the bushes, leaving only the tail  
Limp and bloody in the seat of my palm

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### The Food Chain

The mucus membrane of our stomach  
Accepts us as we are; anything can be  
Beautiful / Useful / Productive / Poetic  
If we break it down into its component parts

In the primordial soup all it took  
To make us was simple protein chains  
Stardust, moonlight, volcanic gas

Even the fiber we cannot digest  
Helps move a world through our guts

The epithelium of our intestines  
Esemplastic little Hegelian philosophers  
The shittiest part of us can take  
Two things and make it whole

Our bone marrow starts here  
Perhaps, we too can learn how  
To accept each other as we are

It takes an ocean to mold a person  
From seafoam and sulfur songs

There is a world where you and I  
Are still single-celled organisms  
Living on the walls of a fumarole  
Deep, deep at the bottom of the sea

In this timeline, this alternate history,  
Utopic in its stillness; we are still poets