



[Alternate Route]
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Hard Wood Bench

On hardwood in a narrow hall
belted police block
the locked
outer door,
leaning as far
as feasible from the stench.

The yellow odor tastes of
quick commonality,
soiled bodies hemmed
in sinus intimacy.
A muscular hand and foot
cuffed man strains forward.
Mouth three feet from mine.
Loud, so loud
over and pounding over
to murder every man,
rape every woman buzzed
thru the inner door.
And me, he wants to kill,
over and kill.

The pinon-man arrested
without pants on my right,
lanky, windmill power,
cackles, lustful stabs,
stab, and stab.

A third man inside the ward
rams his forehead.
into the safety glass
eye hairy,
draws a thin finger
across his throat, slips away
to repeat, and repeat.

Medical personnel come and go.
Police talking hockey lingo.

I want to run from commitment
and save the slumped boy
on my left, eyeliner,
nail polish,
unable to walk,
cold out.

A need to rush him from
this sealed distance
and let move his lungs.
before the state takes him.
We could still go, yet
a clear danger to himself
the therapist said.

I ignored her advice
last month, and like today,
found him chained,
unconscious,
twitching on a gurney,
as cops watched a nurse
fight rings from his fingers.

Real menace lives
between the green walls,
male desperate violence
crammed into dissecting
surveillance. My boy'll be hurt,
mangled. How can I
suffer him
in this leaving place?

I can't keep him home,
or track him down.
Dragged off the plane,
Apprehend by customs agents,
Beat by the police,
I'm not enough
to keep him out of jail,
out of court, or this ward.

Little time, click, click, clicks,
Our escape time dwindles.

Right action a fallacy.
Fear fouls choice.
Run and delay
or let
the unnatural happen?
He downed two liters,
six miles high,
hovered near death.
Now, in this loud,
narrow hall
on a hard wooden bench
I stare at the distance
burgeoning between us.

Medical personnel come and go.
Police talking hockey lingo.

They take his clothes,
his shoes, his belt
and my last “what dare I?”
He signs, accepts
a wristband and buzzes in.
I step out into
the certain half-deserted hall
with no idea if
the marvelous
side-by-side continues.

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has worked in the arts since wandering into an empty theater at nineteen. He's mixed music for the free jazz artists of AACM, run rehearsals for Trisha Brown, and designed sound for the Wooster Group and numerous award-winning films. He's collaborated on texts for devised theater projects and crafted web copy for the United Nations. Galleries in New York and LA galleries show his video art, and after all that, he finally arrived at the art he most loves: writing. His stories have appeared in Flash Fiction Magazine, On-The-High, and The Lifespan Anthology.