

The Wood In The park

Released from the red-bricked prisons
Warm safe embrace,
Years of crime hung heavy
On his hunched old shoulders,
No family, no home.
Carried his belongings in a backpack,

Slept in the wood in the park
Alone beneath the stars,
Where he once played in a forgotten time.
His home now made up with
An old piece of canvas from a lorry
Found at the side of a road,

Half made a roof to stop the rain,
The other half a rough carpet.
Old corrugated sheets made up the walls
Lined with cardboard boxes,
An old army sleeping bag his bed.
If children found his makeshift home

They would pull it down, flee,
Fearing the old man's blank staring eyes.
He rebuilt it each time,
Camouflaged it with leaves and branches.
In the winter smoke from his fire
Gave away his hiding place.

He would venture into town
To get his old age pension and food,
Dirty dishevelled, people avoided him.
For his past crimes he suffered in pain,
His body bent almost double for his sins,
But he found happiness in the park.

Knew the secret places,
Watched the stream glitter in sunlight
A constant living thing,
The lake it fed mirrored another realm.
He would peer into it, dream sweet memories,
Listen to birdsong echo its trill cacophony.

The wind whispered amongst leaves
Of past youth and laughter,
Swans glided by upon blinding shards of light
Dancing upon the windswept lake,
A buzzard circled in slow motion.
He lay upon grassy banks in summer's heat,

Watched the humming bee
Flit from flower to flower till the sun went down.
He looked up at the stars and crescent moon,
Listened to the hoot of the owl
And with a silent goodbye hobbled back to his lair,
A silent shadow melting away.

They never found the collapsed makeshift home,
His grave a mound of leaves and broken branches
Hidden from the world,

The flesh on his body long gone,
Only a skeleton of white bleached bones
Lay upon the earth.

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