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Woodcarver

Keith Wilson

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KEITH WILSON

WOODCARVER

Nobody's uncle but mine, he cut
whistles from slippery mountain
birch, carried them home in his
pocket, for me

—a drunk, he lived
by his wits, an old robber, he stole
books, told lies for bootleg whiskey.

Sitting very straight, frosty, winter-
eyed he stayed in his room, sipped, a
gentleman drunk at noon, calling for
me, shouting my name: and when I
came, he just looked at me, four,
but not ashamed before his eyes.

When he died he filled the longest
casket old John Allen had, plain white.
They stuck a naked pink bulb above the
open lid, for color. They said he
only slept:

Eyes shut, he didn't look
asleep, his pale face, thin fine hair
slicked down, he looked ready to rise;
pink light streaming along his beak of
a nose, he looked ready to get up staring,
blue eyed, the crisp woodchip smell of
him darkening all the roses.