Zelda

He groaned out that name again in the midst of his passion. I lay perfectly still. The bedsprings were squeaky. I didn't want Maryann to hear us.

"I'm not Zelda," I whispered after a moment. Not angrily, just impatiently. My name isn't Zelda. My name is Ellen.

Not half so exciting, I suppose. But I have never been an overly exciting person. Unlike certain other members of my family, I had, in fact, never even come close to being accused of being exciting. Until I met Scott.

His name isn't Scott. I don't know what his name is. Probably something not half so exciting.

I met him on the front steps of the Gore House McDonald's. It was tourist season. It was hot. I had an hour for lunch before I had to return to the outlet store where I spent my time selling dowdy clothes to frumpy middle-aged women who arrived in town by the busload. I spent the first half of that hour wading through the crowds in front of L. L. Bean's and again in front of the counter at McDonald's. There were no seats, of course—I live here. I'm used to it. So—I sat on the great granite slab before the green door which bore a discrete brass plaque with the message "Please use side entrance."

He was wearing a virgin white suit. Three piece, white shirt, white tie, white shoes. He approached casually, dabbing at his brow with a white handkerchief.
I tried not to stare, tried to keep my eyes on my waxy soda cup. But human nature being what it is, coupled with the fact that I had never seen anyone dressed so angelically outside of First Communion at St. Jude’s or in ‘My Partner the Ghost’ reruns, I just had to look up again.

Our eyes met. Or would have, if his look wasn’t so vacant. As if he wasn’t there. A non-person. Dressed entirely in a non-color, ‘May I?’ he inquired. I shifted aside on the granite. He flipped open his handkerchief, spread it on the stoop, and sat.

I watched him out of the corner of my eye. He had lit a cigarette, white, of course, and was blowing filmy white clouds upward toward the maple overhead. His empty eyes were on the street, taking in the vacuum the crowds of Saabs and Mercedes and Vols and Jags, all with New York or New Jersey or Connecticut plates. I goggled the end of my soda. "I still think," he said suddenly, as if he were in the middle of some ongoing argument, "that St. Paul has changed for the worse. Minnesotans in general. I hardly even recognize it anymore."

This is not St. Paul.

I wondered briefly if I should argue the point; he seemed to expect it of me, after all. But on the one hand, I knew that this was not St. Paul. On the other, I had never known St. Paul. I didn’t know if it had, in truth, changed at all, let alone for better or for worse.

I remained silent. I crushed my soiled napkin into my empty soda cup, snapped the plastic cover shut.


I found myself nodding. New Europe. Hollywood. Anywhere free from frumpy middle-aged clothing. Anywhere free from waxy paper cups at lunch. ‘Yes,’ I agreed vaguely. ‘It would be better.’

He was looking at me with those vacant eyes, his lips twisted into a small cynical smile, his head cocked. ‘That’s what I like about you.’ He flicked my chin gently, familiarly, with a finger, and I shifted, finding myself nodding. New Europe. Hollywood. Anywhere free from frumpy middle-aged clothing. Anywhere free from waxy paper cups at lunch. ‘Yes,’ I agreed vaguely. ‘It would be better.’

He walked me back to the store, taking my arm as we crossed the street, keeping a careful distance once he had released me. His conversation was casual, observational, requiring no reply on my part. As I slowed, approaching the glass storefront, he stepped ahead to open the door for me. He bowed slightly over my hand, and was gone, fading into the crowds along the brick sidewalk in the direction of the First Parish Church.

Maryann and the girls, overpowering, no doubt (as I was) by the immaculate, unreal whiteness of my escort, were subdued. I had expected far more ranting from them than I got, more questions, more teasing—I had been mentally preparing myself for it all the way along Main Street. I guess this preparation was not entirely lost, for, by the end of lunch the following day, they had fully recovered and come after me with both guns blazing. Once again he opened the shop door for me, bowed and then kissed my cheek, and disappeared. The girls launched their attack.

Who was he? I didn’t know. Where’d he come from? I didn’t know. Were we serious? I didn’t know. If he was the one wearing white at the wedding, would I wear a tux? Who did he think he was, anyway, Mark Twain?

I didn’t know. Strangely, I found with the passage of a week or two, that I didn’t care overly much, either. It had been some time for me, since the last guy had come and gone. It was Maryann, you see. Her increasingly bizarre behavior... it followed a set pattern: a few cool, uncomfortable meetings, one final frank blowup, and my gentleman friends were off at a brisk pace. No, I didn’t care that this man had yet to reveal his identity. I didn’t care that among his idiosyncrasies were wearing pure white, critiquing the state of St. Paul today, and convincing himself that I was someone whom I surely was not. Just having him around was rather pleasant, just having him walk me back to work after lunch. I could live with his referring to me by the wrong name, just as long as it was he was talking to.

Even when Nancy finally accosted him after our third lunch together, even when she demanded of him whether he thought he was Mark Twain and he replied no, looking surprised at the question, he was F. Scott Fitzgerald, even then I only thought, of course, how logical, I didn’t care. At least it was he he had chosen to play the part of Zelda. After that third lunch, I kissed him in front of the store.

Still, I put off bringing this one home.

A few years after the funeral and Maryann was back with us. We seemed a much-reduced household without Mom. Reduced in size, reduced in cleanliness, reduced in meals, you name it. Hoping, I guess, for some reprieve from this constant reduction—I was less than good company even then—my father let Maryann back into the house, salvaging his principles by refusing to speak to her.

It was always tell your sister this, or tell your sister that. She was no longer his daughter. She was my sister, Mine and mine alone.

She was withdrawn, and no longer bumped into things. She walked, in fact, as if she were on glass, broken, sharp bits of glass. After the first weeks, she and my man felt it imperative to leave his wife of fifteen years for her. Romantic, I thought. I had recently seen My Fair Lady on television.

Mom never did get out of bed. Poor woman, the neighbors would say when they asked about her. ‘The Harrimans from down the street came to tell her from the Book of James, and to pray over her; then they decided that she needed to be anointed, but all I could find for them was a bottle of Moet. They used that. It did not help.

It had become common knowledge by then that the wife of fifteen years, in a fit of despondency, had gulfed down an entire bottle of barbiturates, or aspirin, or Vitamin C—the account varied in the telling—but had not died. Instead, she had been whisked away by her relatives to a warm climate, Arizona or Florida maybe, to recover. The Harrimans revealed all this to my mother during their visit. She took it personally.

‘To think a child of mine,’ she would begin, glaring at me as though it was I, and not Maryann, who had brought this curse down upon our house, ‘could actually drive a poor woman to such lengths. I’ll never live it down. What did I do wrong?’

And when she finally forced herself to die a few months later—it was the only honorable course, in the face of such disgrace—we had to face the disease which killed her. Terminal embarrassment. To think a child of hers.

I thought I saw Maryann at the funeral, up back near the door. She was all in black, with a black net veil over her eyes. She looked, I thought, unhappy, but not particularly grieved. Before I could speak to her at the end of the service, she had disappeared.

Until the summer when I was eleven, the summer when Maryann, who was seventeen, ran off with her Algebra teacher.

I knew she was going to do it. She knew she was going to do it.

I remained silent. I crushed my soiled napkin into my empty soda cup, snapped the plastic cover shut.


I found myself nodding. New Europe. Hollywood. Anywhere free from frumpy middle-aged clothing. Anywhere free from waxy paper cups at lunch. ‘Yes,’ I agreed vaguely. ‘It would be better.’

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Go to bed,” I ordered, turning over, burying my head under the pillow.

‘Goodbye, Ellen,” she insisted a little impatiently. ‘Take care of Mom and Dad.”

‘Mmph,” I replied.

I’m sure Paul and I will be very happy.”

She gave up after awhile, her efforts to talk to me through my empty soda cup, snapped the plastic cover shut.

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father avoided one another; just the sight of one was enough to turn the other in the opposite direction. Eventually I was no longer ordered to carry information between them. They separated, totally.

Dad was drinking now, too, I discovered. During the spring run off the water table rose and flooded the septic system. Two bathrooms in the house, and we were forced to make use of the old two-hole-in-the-barn. The first time I swung open the door, there was a brilliant crash, followed by the hollow sound of rolling bottles. He had acquired quite a collection, I found, pulling the chain on the bulb overhead. Bottles from peppermint schnapps which had formerly reposed in the china closet, coffee bruley, but mostly whiskey. Seagram's Seven. The smell was sour. I stacked the bottles again and prayed for an end to mud season.

Whereas my mother had felt her life destroyed by the absence of Maryann, my father was slowly eaten away by her reappearance. More and more, for longer periods of time, he would absent himself from us, disappearing into the barn or further. Sometimes he would be gone for days. At first we worried—or I assumed Maryann did; but soon we began to regard his disappearances as one does those of a tiger cat. No matter how long he was gone, he would, in the end, come back.

Thus it was, the fall I turned fifteen, that we didn't realize he had finally left us for good. Each night I would set three places at the table, the silver shining dully under the overhead fluorescent ring, three places in case he should return in time and expect to be fed. Each night Maryann would braid three pork chops or bake three potatoes or toss together three small salads. Each night we would divvy up the third. The days grew into weeks, then months. We began to write "return to sender" on his mail.

If Maryann was unduly alarmed at this desertion, she did not show it, and I took my cues from her. Or, tried for, a while. But I couldn't help questioning. Had anything happened to him? Suppose he was dead. Should we call the police?

"No," Maryann ordered at last. "Let's just leave it be." Her silverware clicked purposefully against her plate. "He's made his choice. As long as I keep working and you keep collecting survivor's benefits, we'll be fine. He's made his choice, so we'll make it on our own."

I felt my gall rise, that she should take my fears so cavalierly. "Sure, he's made his choice. And we both know what the deciding factor was, don't we?"

Her reaction was swift and violent. It shook me. "Why don't you just say it, then," she snarled, her eyes glittering in the wavering light."That I'm the kind of woman to make men abandon their families and leave home."

"True. But I was not fool enough, even then, to say it. I did not choose to live dangerously."

"I never should have come back," she said bitterly.

"Why did you?" I was curious. She never spoke of her leaving, let alone her coming back.

She shook her head, her pale hair loosenng, falling about her face. "What choice did I have? After Cecile's grandstand play, swallowing those pills, and after Mom died, Paul totally withdrew from me. He went into a deep depression, and I couldn't do anything for him. At last he poured it all out—everything was all his fault, he had ruined so many lives. He had decided either to throw himself off a bridge, or to move to Europe and join a monastery. I suggested the bridge. He took the next plane out."

So it went. From time to time she would lose some small grain of information about those three missing years, but not often enough for me to feel we were real confidantes. She returned, too, to her old childhood habit of sleepwalking. The first night I awoke to see her standing, dimly outlined, in the doorway to my room. The next time, several weeks later, I was surprised to wake and find her at the foot of the bed. The third time she was leaning over me, and she held a knife.

It was only a butter knife, and she handled it ineptly, so that when I pushed her hand aside in my flight from the bed, she dropped it and it clattered to the floor. I shook her then, hard, screaming for answers, but she only mumbled sleepily, "I thought you were me," and trotted away down the hall. I spent the remainder of that night with one eye open, and the next night rigged a series of empty peppermint schnapps bottles before the door to serve as a warning system. Only one time did I need it; she knocked over one bottle and retreated groggily before the noise. After that she avoided my room as she made her nightly rounds; sometimes, during a late night visit to the bathroom, I would pass her as she made her unconscious way through the darkened rooms. Sometimes I would speak to her, try to get her to go back to bed, but after awhile I simply left her alone.

Over the years her behavior grew increasingly strange. She quit her job at the library and rarely if ever left the house. She hardly spoke to me, or to anyone else. She took to dressing up and serving herself tea on the good china in the late afternoon, drinking mines juleps after dinner. Gradually I learned to ignore her, to go about my own business.

Except that she chased away all my gentlemen callers, as she referred to them in a contrived, over-cultural sort of way. I couldn't bring them home to her. She was too much for them.

That it was after a summer of walking to and from the Gore House with Scott, trying to temper his increasing passion with a kind of restraint—I wasn't Zelda, after all—that he arrived unexpectedly on the doorstep late one autumn afternoon. I had seen him earlier, had walked the length of Main Street at noon with him, had discussed the possibilities of our next meeting. Our courtship, as Nancy and the girls so saccharinely called it, had advanced comfortably beyond their imaginations; Scott and I had been experimenting passionately for weeks just about anywhere we could find a free and private place—which in this town was not the easiest thing to do. We had tried cars, the state park, everywhere. Yet never once had he taken me home to his house or apartment or family; but who was I to question? Neither had I done the same for him.

Naturally then I was surprised to see open the seldom-used front door at the knock to find him standing there, resplendent in his white suit. Maryann was down the hall in the kitchen, setting out her afternoon tea tray. I glanced over my shoulder warily, barely giving him a chance to whisper, "I couldn't want you to see you again," before dragging him bodily up the stairs and out of sight. I hoped I had made it in time.

Once inside my room, the door closed behind us, I turned on him. "What the hell are you doing here?"

He came to me then, his eyes deceptively empty, his smile cynical and sweet, and took me in his arms. His kisses were warm as he sunk back gently onto the bed, taking me down with him.

"My darling Zelda," he groaned in the midst of his passion, I lay perfectly still. "The bedsprings were squeaky. I didn't want Maryann to hear us."


"Shh, darling," he returned, his lips below my ear.

"I'm not Zelda," I repeated thickly. Then the knock came on the door.

I jerked up hurriedly, the bedsprings squealing painfully. Maryann stepped into the room, her smile bright.

"Aren't you going to invite our guest down for some tea?" she asked gaily, as if everything were perfectly normal, as if my face was not flushed, as if my skirt was not pulled half-way up my thighs.

"I hopeless my mouth to speak, but Scott was already upon his feet, straightening his tie. "Ten? Why, I'd be absolutely delighted!" Incredibly, before my very eyes, he took a step toward my sister; she held out her hand and he bowed over it ceremoniously. Then he took her arm. I heard them making their way down the front stairs, forgetting me entirely.

When I caught up to them in the front room, they were seated intimately together on the sofa. Maryann was pouring tea, her fingers gentle and sure on the lid of the teapot, while Scott leaned toward her familiarity. I made a move to join them, oblivious or they were, but it was just this absorption which pulled me up short in my tracks.

"Two lumps for you," my sister asked breathlessly.

He laughed, the sound low and throaty. "You always know how I like my sugar, don't you, Zelda?"

"Oh, Scott," she murmured, touching his cheek with the flat of her palm in a gesture that made me catch my breath. "Oh, Scott. You're such a cad."
Dear Miss Prescott,

Your brother told me about you. I hope you don't mind my taking the liberty of writing to you; it's just that, well, I was taken with you (well, with what Peach said about you. Don't worry it was all good!) that I wanted to make your acquaintance. I thought you might want to write back, that we could be friends through the mail at least, you know, like pen pals. Maybe we could even meet sometime if Ma would let me go to Boston, or if you're ever working down east. I surely would like that.

First I guess I better explain something about myself so as you won't think I'm touched in the head. My full name is Lacy Anne Dwight and I was born and bred in Tenants Harbor, Maine, ten miles from Port Clyde. Ma and I live there now with our cow Bessie and Farley; the hired man. My birthday's in May and I'll be fourteen.

I work on the ferry boat, the Island Queen, that sails daily from Port Clyde to Monhegan Island, and twice weekly to Metinic Island. That's how I met your brother, maybe he told you? I'm a galley girl. I serve coffee, tea, cornbread, chowder, and biscuits. Sometimes they put me to selling tickets. I do other things too, but that's my job. The boat leaves Port Clyde at seven for the first run; I have to be there early to boil the water and make coffee and set up. I want to be a deckhand. I know how to heave a line, can even get a ringer most times when the boys let me try, but that's not often. Sometimes I'm able to go up in the wheelhouse to steer. The captain's kind of gruff though—and it's not just the kind of gruff that doesn't mean anything. I have to catch him on the right days. The days when he's sunny inside. Otherwise he'll just stand there and mutter to himself and then burst out like a steam engine, "This is no place for a young girl." and I'll just skedaddle out of there as fast as I can. No sense in riling him up unnecessarily. Sometimes he is nice to me though. Points out the islands on the chart—Ragged, Criehaven, Matinicus, Seal, and Wooden Ball. He'll explain how come Bird Rock sometimes looks like it's floating in the air like a mirage in the desert. He says it's called looming and has to do with the clarity of the air, and the reflection of the water and the light. I don't exactly understand it, but it sure is pretty up there, and I know I could find my way around the islands if they'd let me.

Don't tell anyone Iris, but when I get older, I want to be a captain. That's why I wanted to write to you. You seem to be doing what you like. What's it like dressing as a boy? Please give my regards to your brother Peach. I look forward most eagerly to hearing from you.

I am,
sincerely yours,

Lacy Anne Dwight

Tenants Harbor, Maine
February 3, 1912

Dear Ira, (I hope you don’t mind my calling you that, Miss Prescott seems so formal.)

Honors! I realized after I sent off the other letter that you might be angry with your brother Peach for having told me about you. I mean about you being a girl and all, when I know that you’re working to keep that a secret. I want you to understand that it was me that was pressing him to talk about his life, and his family, and what he does and all. It does get tiresome going back and forth all the time, and your brother did seem like a real nice fellow, and well, I guess it just slipped out, when I asked Peach who he worked with, and Ira, I wouldn’t give your secret away for all the tea in China. Please don’t let it come between you and Peach, I would hate to think that I could disrupt anything between you. Especially since meeting Peach was such a pleasant encounter. I hope it will only lead to good things, such as you and me becoming friends. I would like nothing better.

Won’t you tell me about your adventures? I’m sure you have many. My only experience with church steeples is using them as landmarks to steer towards on the boat, and once I saw in a stereopticon the story of a child who slid down a steeple and was furrying by his shirt until a young sailor climbed up and saved him. There must be a great amount of excitement in that trade. Of course we get our fair share here too. Yesterday we followed a pod of humpback whales for almost an hour. They were swimming and surfing and breeching all around the boat. They seemed so like us, if it could be something else in another life I think I would like to be a whale. They are such tremendous animals and I don’t just mean their size. It’s hard to believe that anyone would kill them just for oil. I guess it’s a good thing that electricity was invented.

Well I must go to sleep now. My head is getting increasingly heavy. I just wanted to straighten out that area of potential misunderstanding. Now I’ll be able to sleep.

A fond goodnight,
I am,
Lacy Anne Dwight
Tenants Harbor, Maine

February 8, 1912

Dear Ira,

Your brother Peach sure can tie one fine knot. That was how I first started talking to him you know. He’d tried a monkey’s fist in the line blocking off the Purser’s office, so when I went to go in there I saw it, and being as he was the closest one to it, I figured he must have tied it, and I asked him. That’s when he told me about being a steeplejack. I jealousy you and he learned the trade from your father, starting out when you were little tykes. I should think you’d get faint up there, from the height and the smell of paint and all. Then again, folks always ask if I get sick on board (they never ask the boys and I’ve seen Martin turn greener than cheese) and I don’t, and never expect to either, so perhaps it’s just what you’re accustomed to.

There was quite a consternation on board today when it was discovered by Martin, (he’s one of the newest deckhands,) that the line holding one of the heads shut was knotted into a monkey’s fist and other tuticate knots. It took Martin half the morning to untie them. I had my suspicions of who tied the knots, but I held my tongue at Martin’s griping. I didn’t think he went off a biscuit though. I guess it’s a good thing that electricity was invented.

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I am, I mean,
Lacy Anne Dwight
Tenants Harbor, Maine

February 12, 1912

Dear Ira,

I wonder if you might send me a picture of yourself. You see I have a terribly clear and definite picture of what you look like in my mind, but I would hate to have that so well established that when I did see you, I wouldn’t know you from a hole in the wall.

February 14, 1912

Dear Ira,

What a thrill! I received your valentine’s card and the picture of you and Peach today. You look just the way I thought you would. You’ve got that same grin of Peach’s, in fact in the photograph it’s hard to tell the two of you apart, except he’s bigger of course. No wonder no one knows you’re a girl.

Today was a real doozy. Captain Rowles let me steer the longest I ever have today. He even made Martin go below and watch the galley for me! And beat of all, he went and stood out on deck, to feel the sun on his face so, I was steering in the wheelhouse all by myself for a few minutes! I kept wishing there was someone around to see me, but all we saw was a couple of harbor seals sunning themselves as we rounded Goat’s Neck. Now more than ever I know that I want to be a captain.

My plan is to borrow some books on navigation from the library and study them at night so Ma won’t know. I don’t think she would like the idea, already she’s a trifle worried because I haven’t any beaux, but there is no one here who interests me in the least little bit, and besides I can’t see that having a husband did Ma any good, so I can’t understand why she should be pushing the same thing on me. The problem is I’m always so tired when I come home after work. The last boat gets into P.C. at four and it takes nearly an hour to wash up and swap out the galley. Really the boys are supposed to do that, but it takes longer if I wait for them, and I can’t leave until it’s done sometime I just do it. As long as Captain Rowles isn’t around. And usually he isn’t. Most times he can be found on the pier talking with some lady or other who’s been on board that day, or he’s down in the engine room checking to make sure everything’s in order. At least that’s what he says. Personally I think he goes down there to warm up with the heat from the engines, and maybe even to catch forty winks or so. Tied up as we are then, the Queen could fill anyone to sleep.

I am determined though, and as Ma says, when I get that determined look in my eye there’s no stopping me. I have got to figure out a way to spend more time in the wheelhouse without rousing anyone’s suspicions, and to ask more questions without being a pest. The captain told me I did a good job today steering, and that coming from him is a great deal, but right after he’d taken the wheel and told me that, he started frowning and muttering to himself again so I left before he could even say anything about my being up there.

It’s funny. Martin gets to be up in the wheelhouse all the time, but he doesn’t like it. His father runs a tug and he’s been around boats since he was a tot, but whenever it’s his turn for a wheelwatch he’s off in another direction, trying to hide. Strange kid, he’d rather be down selling coffee in my place. I’ll have to see if we can make some kind of deal.

How do you and Peach work together? Do you each do a special part of the job, or do you share all the work? I’d love to hear any details of your life you might care to share with this interested party, and don’t worry, whatever you say, my lips are sealed.

I’m enclosing a photo of me with our cow Rosie. I’m not really much of a farmer, but it’s the only one I’ve got. You can see my skin is almost as dark as yours. The eyes come from my father I’m told, and is probably the same place "whence comes my roving spirit..." Ma’s been after me to put my hair up, she says.
I'm not a child any longer, but I'm perfectly happy to keep on with my unruly locks. What do you think? I'm of half a mind to chop them off and play the boy like you; but wouldn't Ma have a fit. Guess I won't shock her right off. My apologies for rattling on so. Hearing from you at last just set me going. You've got such interesting handwriting, I'd love to see more of it (hint, hint).

Most affectionately yours,
Lacy Dwight
Tenants Harbor, Maine

February 20, 1912

Dear Ira,

Do you ever read poetry? It was at church today that I was thinking—of you—and other things. Church always seems to me the best place for thinking. I hope you won't find that sacrilegious, but it's true and it's why I don't make a fuss when Ma sends me off even on the days her leg is bothering her so she can't go. Which is most Sundays as Ma gets no other day to rest it.

I was wondering if the outside of a church—if your steeples for instance—are as good for thinking as the inside of churches are. And is it different depending on the kind of church. Do you have a religion? I do, Presbyterian, but that's because that's where Ma and Pa were married. Ma thinks it's the only church God can find, but I don't agree with her. One day I stuck into the Lutheran church on the other end of town. It was still very dark and shadowed inside, but I found myself feeling the same way I feel when I go into my church. Quiet and at peace. And if someone were recently inside, I could almost hear the rise of the iron as my worries drifted away. Do you feel this on tops of your steeples? Do you feel closer to the birds and the sky? I wonder if you ever feel as if you can fly? Sometimes I do. In dreams I can. I press my arms up and down—the sit thick like water and I lift myself up and up. It is like being a bird. It is like being a fish.

Ma is calling me now. If I don't answer her she may think I have gone out to feed the cow, she will give up on me and go back to her shelling of beans. I wish you were here now. We could go up by Ira's Ravine and collect slugs for fishing. I bet we could get a jar in no time it's so damp out. And even if we didn't catch any fish we could stand out on the end of the dock and talk and watch the rain making rings on the water, turning my hair into a ball of fuzz.

I am, yours,
Lacy Dwight
Tenants Harbor, Maine

March 1, 1912

Dear Ira,

I hadn't planned to write to you today, was going to get on with my studying. I borrowed a book from the library called The Ways of Navigation. It's slow going, but as I said before I'm determined. Still I wish I hadn't so many questions, and no one to answer them. I'm afraid to pest the captain with too many.

It's raining. It seems as if it's been raining for weeks, and though the first few days of rain are nice, it brings the fresh smells out of the earth and a nice even to walk in for a while, I'm getting tired of it. Today you could hardly make out any land at all what with the fog. The captain gets mean where there's fog, well not so much mean, but edgy. You can tell his nerves are on edge, wouldn't trust him if they weren't, but the last thing he wants is a girl around the wheelhouse, so on days when the fog is as thick as pea soup I don't even bother to go topside, and I send Martin up with the captain's coffee in the morning.

And so now I'm home. It's Sunday and it's raining. What dismal combination. The streets are empty and the harbor's still. Beside's lowing in the barn, I guess the rain has even gotten to her, she's crying for the tender shoots of green just coming up.

I imagine you can't work at all in this kind of weather. I wonder what you do then. You certainly don't seem like the type of girl who'd sit and stare. Perhaps you and Peach go off to taverns and meet the sailors there. Wouldn't I give my bottom dollar to see that. There must be sailors in Boston from every port in the world. Up here all we see are fishermen, and occasionally a schooner 'that's been blown off course. Sometimes I like to imagine that Joshua Sclocum came sailing into Port Clyde in the Spray, on his fabulous journey around the world. What a guy he must have been. Some of the scraps he had.

Oh dear, it's late and I haven't yet ironed my uniform for tomorrow. Must be shipshape and all that. I've pinned the picture of you and Peach on the wall by my bed. That way it's the last thing I see before I go to sleep at night, and the first thing I see in the morning, Ira, what do you think about at night before you fall asleep? I think of the world, round and great like a ball, I think of Christopher Columbus rounding it in his ships, and the porpoises that followed him, sending up white sheets of spray. Of late I think a lot about what you can see from your speeple. And I imagine conversations between us.

Goodnight dear,
Lacy Dwight
Tenants Harbor, Maine

March 5, 1912

Dear Ira,

The crocuses are in bloom out my window. Of course they close up at night and pretend to be sleeping, but I can hear them whispering to each other before I fall asleep. The stars are all bright out my window that my eyes begin to hurt from staring at them. I can see Cassiopeia without much trouble, and the Big Dipper, and by craning my head a little to the left I can just see Arcturus, the bear. Did you ever think about how long those stars have been there? It makes me filled with impatience to think that I can't know what they're saying. I can guess, the wind is thick with it, but I'm not sure. Do you ever wish you could climb your steeples at night?

Ma's downstairs cooking beans. She's been up and about today, her bad leg bothering her as much as ever. Mama went part deaf when she was a girl, about my age. Somehow she always manages to hear what I don't want her to, but let me try and convey something important, like that I need a nickel for a new pad of paper, and she won't hear a thing. As a point of interest I'm thirteen and thirteen quarters though folks say I'm mature for my age. That's why I was able to leave school a year early and start work on the Island Queen. I pretended I was thirteen when the school examiners came, and the teacher, Miss Holloway, let me get away with it 'cause she knew Ma was hard up with leg and all, and needed me to help bring the bread and butter home. My Pa's a rover, Ma says he tried to settle down with her and it lasted about a month. Ma says it was like trying to stick a fly's wing together with glue to get him to stick around. And that when he did stay he'd drink, and when he drank they quarreled. So Ma said she was almost relieved to have him go, until she realized she had a kid in the oven (that's me), and that she'd really have to buckle down to make ends meet. And she did. She's been taking in laundry ever since. She wanted me to do that with her, but I hummed and hawed and pretended Mr. Lionidas down at the dockess much that he finally said he'd put me on the Queen for a week's trial run as a galley girl, even though he said I was awfully young. I told him I was thirteen too.

I guess it's not that different from you pretending to be a boy. I still wonder what that feels like. Do you ever feel as if you're really turning into one? I hope not, as like girls ever so much better than boys. You, Ira, are probably just the perfect combination.

I am, affectionately yours,
Lacy Dwight
Tenants Harbor, Maine

March 12, 1912

Dear Ira,

Still I haven't heard from you. I send all warm wishes nonetheless. As you sent the picture of you and Peach and the Valentine's card, I will make the assumption that you do regard me with affection and are just one of the written word. I am sure you have many other lovers and occupations to keep you happy and content. For myself, I wish it were more so. Ma's leg has been bothering her more and more. I think she would be advised to go to hospital, but she is unwilling, says the cost is too dear, which is true, but she is in pain much of the time, and does not believe what Doctor Hargood tells her. What I say is of no avail. She puts all her faith in Dr. Bon's cure-all pills, and makes I pray for her when I go to church on Sundays.

Aside from that (which means I am tireder than ever these days), all is smooth sailing at work. The captain has been exceedingly pleasant these last days, and at last I know why. Martin confided to me that he saw the captain in Friendship, knocking at the door of Mr. Denbrook's house and being let in by his daughter, a blushing young lady of eighteen or so. So the captain has a young lady, Well,
Tenants Harbor, Maine

I don't envy her in the least, but am glad as it makes the captain more docile. Today he pointed out Havens Reef without my even asking, where at neap tide you can just make out the boatwisp of the Auster, wrecked there not more than ten years ago. And not a single survivor to tell the tale.

I often wonder what lies beneath the sea. Sometimes the fishermen unload the strangest things with their catch. Sea anemones like stars, rocks crusted with slime and tiny weeds like flowers, odd flapping fish that struggle to escape from the nets like birds caught in a wire cage, beating their wings against the sides, rock crabs bigger than the ones I find in the tide pools at Andrew's Ledge, and lobsters, some with the largest claws imaginable, green and brown like kelp, dotted with pinpricks of red.

Sometimes I lie in bed at night and imagine the world reversed, the sea is the sky and I am looking up at sea anemones glowing like stars. I am floating underwater and the weeds of the sea hang down and brush me with their fluttering limbs. The sea is the sky and I am underwater, but it is not like death, not like drowning, there I can breathe and I am safe. I can swim and no one can catch me, not even the fishermen could catch me if I was a fish. Underwater the wild salt of the sea would keep me alive. I can swim, seek out, look out, cut open all the nets swimming under the druggers, the seine, the gillnetters, I can set all the fish free.

Dearest Ira,

I hear there's been a great blue heron around. How do you balance? Do you put sticky stuff on the nose and making me sneeze so.

Lacy Dwight
Tenants Harbor, Maine

March 19, 1912

Dear Ira,

Do you know I went to church today and afterwards heard Madie Ellen talking about her trip to Bangor last week. She's the minister's wife (though you'd never know it from the way she behaves) and so she attended the Ladies Guild Society's annual meeting there, and she came back with the silliest looking hat I've ever seen. A bonnet, but with a wide black band, and listen to this, a cloth bird perched on the brim. Can I swim, seek out, look out, cut open all the nets swimming under the druggers, the seines, the gillnetters, I can set all the fish free.

I am yours,
Lacy Dwight
Tenants Harbor, Maine

March 26, 1912

Dear Ira,

What a scruptious day. After all the rain of last week the woods are finally turning green. I walked across our pasture and over the stone wall into Ram's wood after breakfast. Skunk cabbage is coming up, you can see the shoots poking their way up through the ice, and everywhere water's running. My shoes got all muddy, clear over the button tops and Ma yelled at me, but I didn't care. Saw a great blue heron in the cut—a sure sign of spring—won't be long now before the trillium'll be out. I always did think trillium were the most mysterious flowers, don't you? All red and bloody the way they are. The kind of flower you wouldn't even dream of picking.

Tomorrow I'll be back on the Queen again. They've had her hauled out for repairs and a good scraping of her hull. Spring cleaning. Unfortunately Ma's got the same idea. I wouldn't mind so much if it weren't for the dust getting up my nose and making me sneeze so.

Yesterday there was a big to do in the village. Mrs. Whaite picked up her husband—he's just a scrawny reed of a man— and threw him out. Really, she just picked him up and threw him out. The hullabaloo was later when Mr. Whaite came back to the house looking sheepish. His sister-in-law was dragging him along and muttering to herself, "She's got you even if she don't want you, and sure as shooting you ain't my responsibility Alvin Whaite..." It was Saturday and the village was full of folks doing their shopping and visiting, it being so fine outside, and they all broke up laughing. I was coming out of the Misses Dawes' house having brought them their fresh laundry. I laughed along with everyone else when I found out what was going on. You should have seen the expression on that Alvin Whaite's face, and the two women squabbling over which of them was going to have to take charge of that sniveling red-faced fool. Hard to imagine that he even is a man. Guess you're more of a man than he, Ira, the way he just sets out in the sun all day with a piece of straw between his teeth. No wonder no one wants him.

Goodnight Ira,

I am,

Lacy Dwight
Tenants Harbor, Maine

April 3, 1912

Dear Ira,

Oh, Ira, I wouldn't have minded. You could have written to me any old way, I can't believe it. You—you were so careful to paint every spot. I got the letter from Peach. He said—I don't believe him. It can't be true. He sent another picture. He said you would have wanted me to have it. He said you loved my letters. That you would have answered back, but you were too embarrassed, you didn't know how to write to me—you didn't have the words the way I do. I won't go to church anymore. I refuse. Ma doesn't know what the matter with me. I don't answer her calling, and she hasn't made it upstairs for months now what with her leg. Oh, Ira, what shall I do?

your,

Lacy

April 3, 1912

Dear Ira,

How could you slip off the steeples? Why couldn't you hold on? Just a little longer. Why didn't Peach fall? Oh, Ira, I wanted to fly with you the way I do in my dreams, both of us perched, two green and red parrots, waiting to dive, light plumage under water, feathers, bubbles, learning to fly.

Ira, they must have discovered—you weren't a boy—the death certificate or something—your small white body, smooth as a little fish, eyes glazed like fish eyes, I see you there on the cobblestones, I want to touch you, tickle you awake, you are so still, there is a fly on your eye, I brush it away, I imagine your heart, there in the center of you, blood red and pulsing, I imagine your heart opening like a bird's wings—didn't I tell you, the great blue heron's in the cut—spring is on its way, didn't I—the harbors seals, the whales diving, they're calling. Didn't you, up there high in the air, look for a place for diving, not to drown, you were smiling, in your sleep, I was dreaming.

And you stepped into my side and I suddenly became you. Beside yourself. The other, you were inside me and I became a little boy. This is the way we go. Dressing up. In hats, in bird hats, little booties, lifting up our dresses, finding our skirts, flinging our wings outstretched into the sand, the sea, the surf, salt flaking upon us like snow, the fish, the pier, the light—We were swimming; we had found our way underwater, what I know is that that's where you are, you have found it, soon I will too.

Still and always yours,

Lacy

April 4, 1912

Dear Ira,

I've decided to keep writing to you. Tonight it is quiet. So still. Everything wrapped in a thick blanket of fog. It is like being in a nest of gese, like soft down, until you step outside. Then the night tugs at you with damp easy fingers and lures you out, out into the world.

Everything looks different tonight and I look at everything as if it were. The men on the pier silently tip their hats, even they seem becalmed by the fog. Pressed as if by some ancient stranger. The sea too, is still, rises and falls in silent swells, and no light falls upon it. The street lamps are lit, but shed almost no light, instead they are like cats' eyes gleaming golden in the dark. My footsteps are
muffled on the wide boards of the pier, I can't think what I'm doing down here, my head feels as thick as cotton wool. Down at the end of the pier a new boat is in. The Dauntless. She is a strange looking boat. A pretty, well-kept dragger, but there is something strange about her. It takes me a few minutes to realize what it is. And then I do. There is no rigging on the Dauntless, but what is particularly odd about that is that the stem has a gaping hole in it, the deck where the rigging once was has been ripped out, and not by the looks of it, by the hands of fishermen.

I am, sadly, your,
Lacy

April 5, 1912

Dear Ira,

This morning I awoke feeling stiff all through my body. I didn't know why I felt so odd until I leaned over to look out the window, the sea appeared grey with sprays of white, a squall on the way, and the wind's picking up. Spurs of white, a squall on the way, and a journey! I am riding in a coach on the Boston Maine railroad. My train is en route to the wharves to find a job there. Maybe I will meet Peach, and certainly I will think of you, Ira, perhaps you will be watching me, watching from one of your steeples.

Lions down at the pier, and ask him for a letter, so as to find a job with a boat line in Boston. I will hound the wharves to find a job there. Maybe I will meet Peach, and certainly I will think of you, Ira, perhaps you will be watching me, watching from one of your steeples.

In fond haste,
I am,
Lacy

April 8, 1912

Dear Ira,

The suddenness of Spring was a deceit. Last night the snow began to fall, a wet and heavy snow, as if the sky too were shedding tears, and still it keeps on. I feel Tenants Harbor shrinking around me, squeezing me in its arms, casting a layer of white around me. I must find a way out of here. An old friend of Ma's, Sally Taylor, a schoolgirl friend who left Tenants Harbor with her peddler husband, has returned, her husband is dead, and she wants to settle here again. I think she will live with Ma. I intend to give her my room if she would like it. I must find a way out. I hear there are many boat lines in Boston.

Thinking of you,
Lacy

April 12, 1912

Dear Ira,

What excitement! Ma has given me her red and black valise, and twenty dollars from my earnings on the Queen. I'm to keep it pinned to the inside of my camisole throughout the journey. Yes, oh yes, I, Lacy Anne Dwight, am going on a journey! I am riding in a coach on the Boston & Maine railroad. My train is called 'Star of the Sea.' I will keep my eyes open and see everything. And I am leaving day after tomorrow. There is so much to get ready. I will be staying with Sally Taylor's sister who has a room on Prospect Street. My heart's all a flutter and I don't know what all to do first. I must go and tell Mr.

April 14, 1912

Dear Ira,

The train is a regular joy, although I will always remain partial to boats... I was so enraptured with the Ladies room, hardly bigger than a closet, and the sink shone like a burnished moon in the shadows, the way the moon appeared out my window last night, the last night in my little bed. Sally, who is a dear, insisted that I sleep there my last night, that she would be fine in the fourposter with Ma for another night. Knowing how Ma snores, it was more than kind of her. I left a tiny vase of snowdrops beside the bed, after taking down the picture of you and Peach. I will carry both pictures of you with me wherever I go and I feel a bit scared or anxious in this new and busy city, I will only have to look at your smiling face, Ira, to be reassured.

The sun is shining so hard it could break. We are speeding past brown and gold marshlands where hundreds of birds, geese and ducks and snowy herons, rest after their long journey. It is as if we were all on the wing.
Sequin Island Light

After the child died, rabbits leaped over granite outcroppings, swarming through pine copses, across the meadows and into the yard. When they paused on silent branches to peer in the window, the lighthouse keeper's wife, too long alone, though on clear days she could see Nobska and Popham, the colonies along Small Point, and smoke curling from the cabin on Salters' stove, startled a slow one with a rock and slit its throat, then stuffed it bleeding into her husband's bed then killed her husband then herself.

You sweep your arm across Head's Eddy, Bay Point, the river, the lighthouse islands off the coast, the clouds, the Atlantic, offering it all to me. On Sequin, the light shines unblinking and the foghorn groans on automatic now, higher pitched than the animal moan of the old horn. The Coast Guard killed the rabbits. But dreary afternoons after a morning sail, the abandoned house listing in wind, clouds leaping over the waves, we're certain we hear then shuffling toward us with a sound like the muffled beat of our hearts.

Nancy Arbuthnot
Washington, D.C.
Teaches at U.S. Naval Academy

The Memory Doctor

She was losing her memory. After all, she was seventy-two. But having kept her age a secret her entire life, and not looking a day over sixty-three, she continued to hide it: "The doctor could not know how old I am," she'd say, encouraging the fib. That's all she needs, the daughter thought. It bugged her, that age was such a tragedy to her mother.

She called the daughter long distance on Saturdays. And in her Portuguese-Bostonian voice, would ask, "How are things?" An accent the daughter never really noticed, until some new friend would say, where is your mother from?

The mother always disrupted her thoughts in search of words, and this was not unusual. She reached for words like goods in the supermarket. Picking them out carefully and grumbling about their prices. Finally she'd end up saying, "Oh, you know—that thing." And the daughter would say, "What thing?" And eventually, she would think of it.

But it was when the mother repeated some long story that she told the daughter only moments ago—that the daughter noticed. It was hard not to. Even if the daughter was hardly listening, because the mother could go on and on about the neighbors or what they served at yet another wedding. With a sinking feeling, the daughter noticed. She wanted to point it out to her mother in a way so as not to alarm her. Or call up the great wall of denial. She thought of all possible ways to say, you just told me that. Don't you remember?

She soon found out that it was not only when the mother called long distance that she had trouble with her memory. The rest of the family noticed, too. The next time they spoke, the mother announced that she had an appointment with the memory doctor.

The memory doctor said, "I am going to give you a list of 4 things I want you to remember." And the mother listened carefully. "An apple, the number thirty-six, chicken soup and the color blue." Then they talked about other things until the doctor, cleverly, in the middle of a sentence would ask, "Now what was it I asked you to remember?" And the mother, worried at first, but now bursting with pride, remembered everything.

At the end of their meeting the doctor said, "I will see you again in November." And the mother, with one hand behind her back, quickly counted out all the months till November and said, "I will see you in 5 months, then." —"Well," the doctor exclaimed, "I can see you have no problem with your memory!"

The mother will tell this story over and over again. About how the memory doctor was so surprised that she knew exactly how many months it would be until her next appointment! It was the same trick she played with her age. And this aggravated the daughter. Surely the doctor realized she was playing a trick on him!

Sometimes the daughter, who is only thirty-five, completely blanks out in the middle of a thought. She will walk over to the refrigerator and stand there with the emptiest look. But the moment the daughter loses her memory, she knows she is simply stressed out. The brain is asked too many things, while working on something else completely.

At a second meeting, the memory doctor tells the mother a lengthy, detailed story and then expects the mother to recall it. But the mother, back in her own home, admits she wasn't listening. She wasn't even listening! "Don't you get it Mom—" the daughter wants to shout, "That's why you're going in the first place!"

But the mother has made up her mind not to see the memory doctor again. He has nicked a sensitive spot in the mother's identity: her education. He makes her feel so terribly "stupid."

And when the mother tells him this, the daughter remembers the Alzheimer's patient on TV, sitting with another memory doctor. The Alzheimer's man recognizes the drawing of a harmonica on the table but cannot for the life of him, remember its name. Even when the doctor gives him a hint by pronouncing the first syllable—the man cannot remember. How humiliated the proud man feels being asked such child-like questions! He looks at the memory doctor and says, I do not want to do this again.

And it is not because he is tired.

Diane Balloon
Orono
Is an artist
E. A. Robinson and Gardiner

"Sometimes I wish the tiny town on the Kennebec and all the people in it (myself included) could be blown up among the Asterids."

Poet E. A. Robinson's letters reveal he disliked the city of Gardiner, Maine, where he spend twenty-eight years of his early life. Yet the city he railed about so often was a major influence on his work. The perceptions and values Robinson developed during his early years shaped the viewpoint of the internationally noted poet.

In the 1870s when the Robinson family moved to Gardiner, it was a small industrial town undergoing many changes. There was loss of hunting and business: paper mills, brick yards, machine shops, tool companies, shipbuilding, a thriving ice industry, and a variety of shipping. Mill whistles, saw mill sounds, tugs and steamers, reminded residents daily of the activity and work. Merchants in the area kept long hours, many open from 6 am to 9 pm. Flour sold for six dollars a barrel, milk for six cents a quart and eggs a penny each. One's social position was affected by where the family traded.

Although most activity in Gardiner was devoted to work and moneymaking, there were religious, intellectual and social pursuits.

The Gardiner family and the Richards family, their friends, connections and guests provided examples of how the gentility lived. Gardiner had lectures, music, a library open to the public, and ready transportation to Boston and beyond. Some locals toured Europe, sent sons to Harvard, and furnished homes with foreign goods brought back by sea captains. Failure and success, work and leisure, wealth and poverty, knowledge and ignorance were all present in late nineteenth century Gardiner.

Edwin Robinson came to that city at six months old, when the Robinson family moved to a big, comfortable house on Lincoln Avenue. Robinson's father, Edward, had accumulated eighty thousand dollars buying and selling timber lands and keeping a general store in Head Tide, Maine. In 1870, Edward decided to invest in industries in Gardiner where his three sons would have better schooling. The children grew up in this community. The eldest, Dean, a bookish child, was expected to become a doctor. Herman, eight years younger, handsome and charming, was a logical successor to his businessman father. Edwin, the youngest, was a shy child, neither physically outstanding nor remarkably studious. He came home "tuckered" from playing with the neighborhood children, and at school he was often out of the window. When he was eleven a teacher, annoyed at his inattention, struck him on the ear, causing an earache and a problem that was to recur at intervals. Strangely, this incident later played a part in deciding his years at Harvard.

"I find it pretty hard to speak correctly in a town where man, woman and child says 'ain't' and 'he don't.'"

Robinson's love of reading and his respect for language further set him apart from many of his peers and the local residents. As he grew older and developed an interest in poetry, he regarded himself as different from other boys his age. Early on he exhibited a fascination with words. At ten he played word games with neighbors Gus and Alice Jordan. Years later his letters reveal that he was "an incorrigible father of words who thought nothing of fishing for two weeks for a stanza, or even a line."

Edwin, influenced by his father took the "scientific" course in high school which disqualified him from college. But, here he discovered a love of literature, especially the classics. During his high school years, Robinson, through a neighbor and poet, Alanon Schumann, met with the Gardiner Poetry Society at the home of Caroline Swan, a former teacher and an early student at Radcliffe. Attendees at those meetings claim that the young Robinson was instructed and encouraged by the group throughout his high school years.

According to Gardiner author Laura E. Richards, no Robinson verse exists from this period because Robinson fed it to the furnace when students laughed at his reading in the cellar of the high school. So no juvenilia survives.

Robinson had an extra year at Gardiner when the principal found the instruction to be inferior and required another year. Robinson and his friends Arthur Gleedhal and Ed Moore stayed on, calling themselves "the League of Three," wearing triangular insignia and meeting in the belfry to smoke and talk after school.

So, despite Robinson's claims of an unhappy youth in Gardiner, he found friends and mentors there. Two years later he defended this period by writing, "don't let God's sake labor under the delusion that these days were wasted. These world is at best a diabolically practical place and if you are able to draw a little poetry somewhere out of the past, do it."

During the two years after graduation from high school, Edwin struggled with odd jobs, including keeping time for an ice company and assisting on a river survey, where he earned fifty dollars for a month's work.

"Dollars are convenient things to have, De Smith, but this diabolical, dirty race that men are running after them disgusts me. I shall probably outgrow this idea, but until I do I shall labor quite contented under the delusion that (there) is something to life outside 'business.' Business be damned."

For Robinson, that "something to life outside business" was literature. His letters from this period reveal great varieties of reading, the classics, poetic works: Thomas Hardy's novels, Tolstoy, Kipling, Stockton, Arnold, and Carlyle. Some of his correspondence tends to literary criticism. He apologized to his friends...

New England

Here where the winds shift and blow}
And children learn to walk on frozen toes,
Wander begets an ev'ry of all that's new
Who fed elsewhere with such a lyric yeast

Of love that you will hear them at a feast
Where demons would appeal for some repose,
Clamoring where the chalice overflows
And crying wildest who have drunk the last.

Passion is here a solitaire of the wits,
We're told, and Love a cross for them to bear;}
Joy shivers in the corner where she kneels
And Conscience always has the rocking-chair,
Cheerful as when she tortured into fits
The first cat that was ever killed by Care.

E.A.R.
Harry Smith for filling his correspondence with comments on books, but there was little else to write about, situated as I am.

When his chronic ear condition required it, Robinson was forced to make frequent trips to a specialist in Boston. His need to be in Boston, his desire to study at Harvard, and his brother Herman's intervention with their father, gained Edwin permission to become a special student at the University, where he remained until 1893.

Robinson was impatient to get away, but letters show that his ideas and themes were already taking shape, influenced by the town he was eager to leave.

"The truth is, I have lived in Gardiner for nearly twenty-two years, and metaphorically speaking, hardly been out of the yard. Now this is not right: the process tends to weaken one's thoughts, or rather sympathies, to an unwholesome extent.... Solitude (in the broad sense of the word) tends to magnify one's ideas of individuality; it sharpens his sympathy with failure where fate has been abused and self-demoralized."

Robinson's two years at Harvard are detailed in many letters to Harry Smith and Arthur Glishill. He dropped Anglo-Saxon, was disappointed in his Shakespeare course, did well in composition but disliked how it was taught. At Harvard, too, he found he was not suited to "sociability." He avoided large mixed groups, preferring those, as in Gardiner, the company of a few men with whom he felt comfortable. Gardiner friends occasionally visited him, including Alanson Shumway and Horace Smith. There were visits to the opera, concerts, museums and the theater. Always there was discussion of poetry and literature.

Robinson was rather depressed after his first year at Harvard, but returned in the fall, "this year to work," he wrote Glishill. He read a lot the second year and worked harder, but declared himself "only moderately well-satisfied." His letters to Smith sum up his Harvard years this way: "I feel that I have gotten comparatively little from my two years, but still, more than I could get in Gardiner if I lived a century." His aversion to Gardiner, rather than failing with distance, seemed to grow. Yet, out of funds, he returned home that June.

"The trouble is not so much with Gardiner as with its population, that is, the size of it. A man is not supposed to think here; he is supposed to get a job; then he has acquired absolute respectability."

When Robinson returned, his letters reveal his difficulty in adjusting to the practical, commercial life, where reading and writing poetry were not respected by the common citizenry. His wish and need to write and to read were hampered by lack of funds to support himself. He wrote to Smith that he was dependent on his money for every penny he spent. His father had died in 1892, his brother Horace Dean Robinson was struggling with morphine addiction, and Herman's investments were failing.

During this period E. A. had a series of odd jobs which were not suited to him, "this is supposed to support himself He wrote Glishill. He read a lot the second year and continued periods. He wrote to Smith, that he was dependent on his father for every penny he spent. His father had died in 1892, his brother Horace Dean Robinson was struggling with morphine addiction, and Herman's investments were failing.

"I am sorry to learn that I have paid myself in such lugubrious colors. The world is not a 'prison-house,' but a kind of spiritual kindergartens, where millions of bewildered infants are trying to spell God with the wrong blocks."

This was strong fodder to feed the opinions of critics who seized on Robinson's obsession with failure, his pessimism, and his bleak outlook.

Although there were many reviews of early Robinson work in the local Gardiner Reporter Journal, he was consistently referred to by his father's name, Edward, a fact that probably only added to his ennui for his home town.

Before Robinson left Gardiner in the fall of 1897, he wrote to Smith:

"Sometimes I feel a little queer about going, but I know it's the thing for me to do. I have lived this kind of life for so long as I can remember - physical, intellectual, and spiritual - demands a change.

Except for the summer of 1898, Robinson never again remained in Gardiner for extended periods. He visited occasionally, and corresponded regularly with Gardiner friends, but he no longer considered it his residence.

Ironically, upon his death in 1935, he was buried in the Palmer-Robinson lot in Oak Grove Cemetery, two hundred and eighty-four steps from his old home, now forever part of the city he sought to leave.

"Whether all towns and all who live in them Are more or less the same, I leave to you."

"Tasker Norcross"

Glenna Nowell
Gardiner
is the library director

"My worst and most persistent enemy... is a constant inclination to write poetry. Sometimes I am half afraid the damned stuff will kill what little ability I have."

"Above (all) I find here in Gardiner to interest me is what I conjure up from my own fancy."

Robinson's first appearance in print was an essay, "Books," published in the Gardiner High School literary journal, "The Amaranth," in 1887. He wrote the class ode for graduation. His first published poems "THALIA" and, four months later, "The Gallery Race," were printed in the Gardiner Reporter Monthly. Five contributions to the Harum Advocate were printed during 1891 and 1892.

After the return from Harvard, several years were spent on writing projects that "came to naught." A Robinson letter comments, "my rejection slips must have been one of the largest and most comprehensive in literary history, with unnumerable duplicates." After more than two years, "The House on the Hill" and "The Miracle" appeared in the Globe, a New York magazine which offered no payment for the works.

After much worry, rejection and struggle, Robinson decided to publish his own manuscript of The Torrents and the Night Before, a collection of poems. A few weeks before the publication, Robinson's mother died. The unusual circumstances of her illness and death must have been traumatic for the family. Her doctor diagnosed black diphtheria and refused to return. Noyoon would enter the house. Dean, the doctor's son, addicted to morphine, often bedridden and delirious, pulled himself together enough to help. Herman and his wife Emma moved into the house, and together with Edwin they cared for Mary Robinson the few days before her death. The undertaker left the coffin on the porch; her minister, standing outside on the porch, read the funeral service through an open window. Lacking a horse and driver, the Robinsons loaded their mother's coffin into an express wagon for the trip to the nearby cemetery. No one visited the house for five months.

Shortly after the funeral, the bundle containing the three hundred and twelve copies of The Torrents and the Night Before arrived. Robinson could not "take enough interest in them to open the package until evening." The publication was to have been a surprise for his mother.

While The Torrents and the Night Before was not widely reviewed by major critics, it did receive a review by The Bookman, a leading literary periodical. The review praised the poet's "fire," "swinging," "passion" and noted that readers who "have any liking for poetry will read on to the end." One comment that his humor was "of a grim sort, and the world is not beautiful to him, but a prison-house," inspired a now famous reply from the poet:

"I am sorry to learn that I have paid myself in such lugubrious colors. The world is not a 'prison-house,' but a kind of spiritual kindergartens, where millions of bewildered infants are trying to spell God with the wrong blocks."

This was strong fodder to feed the opinions of critics who seized on Robinson's obsession with failure, his pessimism, and his bleak outlook.

Although there were many reviews of early Robinson work in the local Gardiner Reporter Journal, he was consistently referred to by his father's name, Edward, a fact that probably only added to his ennui for his home town.
Mr. Flood’s Party

Old Ellen Flood, climbing alone one night,
Over the hill between the town below
And the forked stunted hawthorn
That held as much as she should ever know.
On earth again of home, paused warily,
The road was his with not a native near;
And Ellen, having leisure, said aloud,
For no man else in Tilbury Town to hear:

“Well, Mr. Flood, we have the harvest moon
Again, and we must not have many more;
The bird is on the wing, the poet says,
And you and I have said it here before.
Drank to the bird.” He raised up to the light
The jug that he had gone so far to fill;
And answered huskily: “Well, Mr. Flood,
Since you propose it, I believe I will.”

Alone, as if enduring to the end
A valiant armor of scarred hopes outworn,
He stood there in the middle of the road
Like Roland’s ghost waving a silent horn.
Below him, in the town among the trees,
Where friends of other days had honored him,
A phantom salutation of the dead
Rang thinly till Old Ellen’s eyes were dim.

Then, as a mother lays her sleeping child
Down tenderly, fearing it may awake,
He set the jug down slowly at his feet
With trembling care, knowing that most things break;
And only when assured that on firm earth
It stood, as the uncertain lives men
Anxiously did wait, he paced away,
And with his hand extended passed again:

“Well, Mr. Flood, we have not met like this
In a long time, and many a change has come.
To both of us, I fear, since last it was
We had a drop together. Welcome home!”
Conversially returning with himself,
Again he raised the jug up to the light;
And with an acquiescent quaver said:
“Well, Mr. Flood, if you insist, I might.

“Only a very little, Mr. Flood—
For auld lang syne. No more, sir; that will do.”
So, for the time, apparently it did,
And Ellen evidently thought so too.
For soon amid the silver loneliness
Of night he lifted up his voice and song,
Secure, with only two moons listening,
Until the whole harmonious landscape sang—

“For auld lang syne.” The weary throat gave out;
The last word wavered, and the song was done. He
Raised again the jug regretfully And shook his head, and was again alone.
There was not much that was ahead of him,
And there was nothing in the room below—
Where strangers would have shut the many doors
That many friends had opened long ago.

E.A.R.

Richard Cory

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially thin.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was alwayshuman when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
“Good-morning,” and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
And admirably schooled in every grace;
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meet, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

E.A.R.

“Roses thrown on marble stairs”:
the poetry of
Edwin Arlington Robinson

“...great oaks return
to scorns out of which they grew.”
—E.A.R.

As graduate students of literature trying to take notes, we were given films by the long-name fellows. Edgar Allen Poe quickly became EAP, Edwin Arlington Robinson became EAR. And they remain so today. When discussing EAR's classic poem (printed here) about a looped old man, "Mr. Flood's Party," everyone in the midwest—teachers and students alike—pronounced the character's first name, Eben, as EE-ben, just the way theatre groups said the name for a character in Eugene O'Neill's play, Desire Under the Elms. Imagine my surprise to hear it otherwise and hearing it loud as EAD's works one lilting summer afternoon on the lawn of the house in Head Tide, where EAR was born. (Formerly owned by Colby; it bears a plaque.) Colby's then-President, Robert Strider, boomed out his favorite poem in his rich stentorian bass: "Old EBB-en Flood," he began, "climbing alone one night... EBB-en. "He said EBB-en," I thought. And suddenly my familiar poem changed entirely; a richer, deeper meaning emerged. The desperation of a lonely old hush had an undertone of consolation, of acceptance of time's relentless passing: Flood, flood-tide, ebb, ebb and flow, Head-of-the-Tide. It fit.

How often did others who were not northern New Englanders "miss" EAR, I wondered. How often did more optimistic midwesterners and westerners, or southerners inhabiting ambitions of honeysuckle and Spanish moss, miss EAR's "cosmic chill," simply fail to grasp his hard-eyed disillusion, the goon and dream surrounding his characters, his "children of the night," as he called them, those "scattered lives"? How many understood old Clavering, "who died because he couldn't laugh?" How many Americans, officially optimistic, "problem solvers" with the future spread in front of them as broad as my prairies, could "see" the late-19th c. desperation as Maine emptied out, as businesses closed and farmers fled? In EAR's sad poem, "The Mill," a husband turns to his wife and says, "There are no millers any more"; later, she finds him "hanging from a beam," wherein she decides to plunge herself into the millpond. Upon reading this, a student from
Chicago said to me, "It's stupid. They both committed suicide, for heaven sake. Why didn't they go get another job?"

So, in 1969, with New England eyes I rended "Richard Cory," the poem about the guy who was "richer" than his fellow townspeople, but who "one calm summer night/Went home and put a bullet through his head." I walked around downtown Gardiner, years before its fixing-up and brick sidewalk gentrification, pretending to be the man-on-the-street who narrates the poem. I listened again to the insipid song of the poet by Simon and Garfunkel. I discovered we flatlanders had been missing it all along. As does the song, we emphasized the shocking last line, "put a bullet through his head," and satisfied ourselves with the smug and utterly American interpretation that "money won't make you happy, just look at this poor dope," or something equally easy. What I had missed is that the speaker of the poem is a fool, a Gardiner hick, one of those slack-jawed gapers from small-town New England whom EAR hated. He talks like an idiot, saying Cory is "rich--yes, richer than a king!"; he had missed the tone of EAR's poem, his mockery of the speaker's gee-whiz jealousy, and EAR's implied criticism of the speaker's self-indulgent self-dramatizing: "So on we worked," he pontificates, "and waited for the light;/And went without the meat, and cursed the bread." Cursed? Right. That's perfect, that's the kind of local who, sensing a conversation has moved beyond fishing shocks and the Gardiner Tigers, says, "Ain't you smart?" The poem is about stupidity and provincialism as much as it is about suicide. The last two lines are spoken coldly, without a trace of sympathy, even curiosity, and almost with satisfaction. That they are set right against the poor-me self-dramatizing makes EAR's indictment, though subtle, the more criticism of the speaker's self-indulgent self-dramatizing: "Ain't you smart?"

A long poem; he wrote thirteen long straight narratives in blank verse, that difficult looking rhymes, the eight lines, then the finishing six, with no English-style metered villanelles, monologues, dialogues, portraits, lyrics, and meditations. He worked his way through writing between 1900 and 1920 apparently does not either. As the cliché goes, EAR "celebrated the success of failure and the failure of success." He was surrounded by it: his father lost all his money in a crash, his brother his in western speculation, and another doctor brother became an addict. Yet, in EAR's dissembling vision, he joins the great tradition of 19th c. nay-sayers, dark Poe, exclusive Thoreau, brooding Hawthorne, and the Melville who could "say no, in thunder!" (remember bleak Bulkeley, who declined work and everything else by saying "I prefer not to"). As EAR wrote to his gardiner friend and fellow writer, Laura Richards, "...I am what I am, and therefore have my own paint-pots to dabble with. Blacks and grays and browns and blues for the most part—but also a trick, I hope, of letting the white come through in places" (1902). EAR struggled constantly, even in NYC, to hold on, to somehow keep writing.

And write he did, in almost every form available: ballades, rondes, trioles, villanelles, monologues, dialogues, portraits, lyrics, and meditations. He mastered them. His Collected Poems contains 89 sonnets—count 'em, 89—most in the Italian (or Petrarchan) mode, with its more meditative movement, its back-looking rhymes, the eight lines, then the finishing six, with no English-style stanzas-ham-closing coupler. About half of these are superb things, and his rhymes are immaculate. EAR had a good ear, though he was somewhat deaf. On the other hand, he is also, perhaps, the only poet since Whitman devoted to the truly long poem; he wrote thirteen long straight narratives in blank verse, that difficult unrhymed iambic five-beat line in which, as Shelley once said, "there is no shelter for mediocrity."

Some poems, "Eros Turannos" (c. 1916) for example, feel surprisingly contemporary. In it, a wife strives to keep a good opinion of her faithless husband, in the face of village gossip; he's a royster, and she knows it, but she also knows she must somehow survive. "... home, where passion lived and died/Becomes a place where she can hide," EAR writes, thankfully innocent of the word "agoraphobia." The poem is extraordinarily sensitive, psychologically subtle, and free of knee-jerk moralizing and reflexive feminist outrage. It is a poem about deception, the incredible complexities of marriage not easily abandoned, about how a woman's age shrinks her choices; she sees through her husband's "engaging mask" well enough, but EAR adds, "But what she meets and what she fears Are less than are the downward years." It is a poem about how one's illusions are sometimes necessary, how they sometimes save us, and certainly shape us. EAR's enormous generosity and considerable understanding can be seen when he says of her "... for they? That with a god have driven, / Take what the god has given." And what has the god (the bastard husband? her fate? a life?) given? Well, maybe not much. And certainly not what she expected. Life is rough, he implies, but at least it's our life. Of the "gift," EAR says, "like waves breaking it may be," and he goes on to offer two other analogies, which, though depressing, are presented in powerfully charged language. The gift is "... like a changed familiar tree, Or like a starway to the sea Where down the blind are driven."
Oh, my. "Blind" by our illusions, in the play-out of our lives we are "driven" down "a stairway to the sea." In poems like this one, EAR's insight is simply amazing, and his ability to humanize his pessimism with compassion thoroughly admirable.

Curiously, EAR appears to write without using his five senses. The work sometimes feels barren, unresonant. Not a nature poet, he is mainly interested in human personality. In poem after poem we find EAR, or a created speaking voice, telling complicated stories, or rather, explaining situations people have got themselves into. Usually the situation is fixed, the story over before we arrive in it, and not much happens beyond the explanation. EAR is not much of a narrator, but rather an explainer. In short, he is an intellectual. As his best critic, the southerner James Dickey puts it, "in Robinson, the mind eats everything and converts it to part of a conflict with self." As EAR's own couplet says:

"We die of what we eat and drink,
But more we die of what we think."

His mode is cerebral, analytical, his approach tentative, provisional. Conjectural, is what Dickey calls it, and explains that EAR does not hold ideas and defend them (as a propagandist or romantic would). Dickey notes that EAR's favorite words are nur and nght, which suggests a mind fascinated by alternatives, possibilities, doubts. His Maine critics, Louis Core of Bowdoin, and Richard Cary of Colby, use many of the same words—crypt, avuncular, an intellectual puzzler, problem, occasionally dull. Dickey's list: uncertainty, speculation, reticence, slightly morbid, pseudo-scholarly, profoundly commonplace, solitary, compassionate, snide. I would try to add that is a cast of mind I find to be peculiarly "New England," questioning, sometimes playful, distrustful of high-mindedness, lerry perhaps of yet one more of Emerson's transcendencies—in short, just the kind of mind you can still sometimes find passing time around a woodstove in some country store. Or the kind of mind shaped in the nightly meetings of EAR's Quadruped Club as they huddled in a cold third floor on Gardiner's Water Street, matching their wits with the world. "The world," EAR once concluded, "is a hell of a place... but the universe is a fine thing." "Well, that distinction eludes me. So sometimes I go down to Water Street, and I look up at what I hope is the correct building, and I stare at it, trying to imagine Gardiner then, the snow and the mud streets. Then I try to imagine that bunch from the boondocks, upstairs arguing all night about Liberalism and Democracy and God and people's lives. I say "Eben Flood" the right way. These moments, I think, get my midwestern mind a lot closer to the essential honesty and skeptical caution of the man himself. "Open your EARs," I want to say to people. Read him again. He may be right. "Passion" around here may not be. But be assured, in EAR we do not have a romantic posture, a false of sensitivity; we have a local boy who had the courage to stand up and ask the serious questions while admitting he did not have the answers. "The Earth," he once wrote, "is a vast spiritual kindergarten where millions of bewildered infants are trying to spell God with the wrong blocks." Right blocks, anyone?

Terry Plunkett
Hallowell
teacher at UMA

In New York City, EAR worked as a checker in the construction of the subway system. An awful job, underground, the atmosphere was damp and gaseous. President Theodore Roosevelt read his work and was so impressed he offered him out and offered him a sinecure in the Customs section of the Treasury Department. T.R. wrote him, "I want you to understand that I expect you to think poetry first and Treasury second." The job lasted from 1905 to Spring, 1909. Roosevelt even wrote a literary review of one of EAR's volumes. Years later, EAR wrote to T.R.'s son, Kermit Roosevelt: "I don't like to think of where I should be now if it had not been for your astonishing father. He fished me out of hell by the hair of the head."

How Annandale Went Out

"They called it Annandale—and I was there
To flourish, to find words, and to attend:
Liar, physician, hypocrite, and friend,
I watched him; and the sight was not so far
As one or two that I have seen elsewhere:
An apparatus not for me to meddle—
A wreck, with hell between him and the end,
Remained of Annandale; and I was there.

"I knew the man as I knew the man;
So put the two together, if you can,
Remembering the worst you know of me.
Now view yourself as I was, on the spot—
With a slight kind of engine. Do you see?
Like this...You wouldn't hang me? I thought not."

EAR.

EAR's brother Dean, twelve years his senior, was a Gardiner physician. Sadly addled, he died in 1939, probably of an overdose of morphia. EAR was deeply upset. In 1962, EAR's grandson, David Nivison, wrote a compelling article in the Colby Library Quarterly (Series V, No. 8, December) arguing that EAR's sonnet, "How Annandale Went Out," is about Dean, about how a doctor sworn to preserve life could take his own. Obviously about euthanasia, the poem is narrated by a physician who is attending "it," or Annandale the patient. Nivison claims that the narrator and the "it" (line 1) are the same person, that is, the doctor and the dying (dead) man are one and the same. In effect, a dead man speaks the poem; a doctor (Dean?) confronts society's disapproval and justifies his treatment of himself with the method of suicide. Nivison's reading has convinced many, especially if the obscure "slight kind of engine" in line 13 is interpreted as a syringe.

T.P.
Eros Turannos

She fears him, and will always ask
What fated her to choose him;
She meets in his engaging mask
All reasons to refuse him;
But what she meets and what she fears
Are less than are the downward years,
Drawn slowly to the foamless weirs
Of age, were she to lose him.

Between a blurred sagacity
That once had power to sound him,
And Love, that will not let him be
The Judas that she found him,
Her pride assuages her almost.
As if it were alone the cost,
He sees that he will not be lost,
And waits and looks around him.

A sense of ocean and old trees
Envelops and allures him;
Tradition, touching all he sees,
Beguiles and reassures him;
And all her doubts of what he says
Are dimmed with what she knows of days—
Till even prejudice delays
And fades, and she secures him.

The falling leaf inaugurates
The reign of her confusion;
The pounding wave reverberates
The dirge of her illusion;
And home, where passion lived and died,
Becomes a place where she can hide,
While all the town and harbor side
Vibrate with her seclusion.

We tell you, tapping on our brows,
The story as it should be,—
As if the story of a house
Were told, or ever could be;
We'll have no kindly veil between
Her visions and those we have seen,—
As if we guessed what hers have been,
Or what they are or would be.

Meanwhile we do no harm; for they
That with a god have striven,
Not hearing much of what we say,
Take what the god has given;
Though like waves breaking it may be,
Or like a changed familiar tree,
Or like a stairway to the sea
Where down the blind are driven.

E.A.R.

When asked if his sense of humor lengthened his life: “I think my life has lengthened my sense of humor.”
On the last day of school Buck Nix made his first stage appearance since muffling the line "Not for long was he alone!" in a Columbus Day play in the second grade. He had on a suit for the third time in his life. His mother had bought this particular suit for him—instead of the one he liked—because it would, she said, wear like iron. It was the color of iron, the weight of iron, as comfortable as iron. Buck had worn it first to the funeral of his grandfather. He had worn it again at Easter, then put the suit away without remembering to take from the coat pocket a hard-boiled egg. The egg had been discovered later and removed but a faint odor of vulg ination still clung to the suit.

"Hang up your suit," his mother called after him.

In his room Buck changed clothes, then took a pair of scissors and cut four inches off the sleeves of his suit coat. He sat on his bed, threaded a needle and began hemming the cuffs of the coat so that the alteration of the suit would be undetectable. This was the plan: the next time his mother insisted he wear the infamous suit for some special occasion he could tell her truthfully that it no longer fit, that he had outgrown it.

Buck had never sewn before, but he had seen it done, and on his way home from school he had rehearsed the job in detail in his imagination, had mastered needle and thread, and the imagined result had been satisfactory. Now Buck sewed in reality, and with the first few stitches his confidence turned to panic. The near alteration he had intended now appeared to be a hideous mutilation, a bizarre embroidery made up of little knots and loops that formed out of thin air and refused to go away. He persevered miserably, producing one unique stitch after another, each more reckless and harmful than the one before. He worked on the second cuff, applying stitches like frightened gunshots at something in the dark, shaping the cuff into some clever-looking thing, half hand puppet, half marionette, which changed expressions when certain threads were touched.

Buck stayed in his room all afternoon. When his mother called him to come downstairs he noticed for the first time that it was getting dark outside. He wildly applied the last few stitches to the cuff and when he stood up to put the suit away he discovered he had sewn the sleeve of the coat to the tip of his jeans. He tried to separate the two garments by force but the thread was too strong. He looked for the scissors but they were lost. He tried to take off his jeans but discovered that the tail of his tee shirt too had been smugged by the stitches. Mrs. Nix called again and threatened to come upstairs.

Buck appeared before his mother just as she was rising from the table to go look for him.

"What do you want?" he asked impatiently. The coat was folded over his arm in front of him, nearly yet carelessly, as if he preferred because of the heat to carry rather than wear it. His mother had set down her glasses to rest her eyes, but now she picked them up again, held them to her face and stared at Buck's troubled expression, at the neck of his tee shirt hanging from the button on the front of the coat. Mrs. Nix asked suspiciously.

"What's the matter?" Buck asked suspiciously.

"The matter with you?" she riposted testily. "Come here. There's a loose button."

Buck advanced stiffly until he stood before her. She turned in her chair to face him. Buck tightened his grip on the coat but she didn't try to take it from him. A long thread was hanging from the button on the front of the coat. She tested the button to see if it was loose, then took the end of the thread and began winding it around the stem of the button. This operation required both hands so she set down her glasses again. She squinted and bent her head closer and, as she worked, a ribbon of her hair fell unnoticed across the thread and joined it in being tightly wound out of sight behind the button.

"There," she said, then "Ow!" as she raised her head and sat back. "My hair's caught," she reported tensely. "Get me the scissors, quick." Overweight and sedentary, she was suffocating in this bent position. She held on the edge of the table with both hands so she kept from toppling forward. "Get scissors," she commanded huskily.

Buck took a tentative step backward. The long wisp of dark hair grew taut between the coat button and his mother's frowned brow. Mrs. Nix's face was turning red except for a small whitish bulge of skin at her hairline. Buck didn't know what to do. The scissors were upstairs in his room, somewhere but, under
the circumstances, even if they'd been a few feet away he would be unable to reach them without either pulling her hair out by the roots or confusing about the suit.

Mrs. Nix growled. "Leave the... the..." The distraction of the napping little pain made her forget for a moment what it was called... "...the coat, you dope. Give me the coat. My hair's caught on the coat, you... you..."

"I can't."

"Why can't you? You'll be sorry for this." She raised her head to glare at him menacingly, but the gesture startled and tears sprang into her eyes, and into Buck's too. This suit was having such an evil influence on his life that if he ever wrote his autobiography he'd have to devote a whole chapter to it.

"Let's go look for the sciences together," he suggested.

Mrs. Nix gave up trying to make Buck understand the situation and instead around a distant sounds of slaps, curses and thumpers from the house beside them and in the morning had black bread, Turkish cigarettes and warm goat milk for breakfast—Mrs. Nix pulled her son to his feet and swung him about the room by the sleeve of the coat, alternately yanking him toward her and flinging him away in jingebug style as she tried to tear the coat off of him. Whenever one of these maneuvers caused Mrs. Nix a twinge of scalp pain she pulled Buck's hair to show him what it felt like.

Outdoors, below the back window, the little fire Mrs. Nix had doused earlier with tea, continued to burn secretly. For hours orange sparks had combed nervously, like a tingling feeling on the scalp, through a mass of dead grass, turning individual strands into gray curls, until all along the back of the house a multch of warm ash covered the ground. A change in the wind brought the fire out of hiding. The tall reeds behind the house withered in a bright flash and sparked jumped onto the back wall. The fire easily got a grip on the house and quickly climbed from the sill to the peak using the dry clapboards as a trellis.

Mrs. Nix had succeeded in separating the coat from her son but still hadn't been able to disentangle her hair from the button. She paused to rest her eyes. Buck rested too. He looked around the room and thought he saw the light of the lamp reflected dizzyingly in the glass of the window. Then he realized the window was open.

"Mom—the house is on fire."

Mrs. Nix had burned down two other houses so she and Buck knew what to do. Holding hands they ran across the room away from the smoke and fire, out into the night. The yard was brightly lit by flames consuming the back of the house with a churning noise. Shadows writhed on the lawn. The pitch in the burning wood exploded like firecrackers and shot orange sparks onto the ground. Buck and his mother and the burning house stood under a dome of light, cut off from the rest of the world by darkness and smoke. Mrs. Nix, dazed, disoriented and exhausted, a twisted garment wrapped around her neck like an absurd scarf, halted Buck to keep from falling.

"This is your fault," she said as she gathered her remaining strength into one hand, then beheld Buck's head with thumbs until neighbors grabbed and took her away with them to call the fire department.

Buck sat down on the roots of a tree and watched the fire, feeling guilty and indignant. He sensed the truth—that he had been chomped once too often, that his skull had cracked like an eggshell, exposing what was developing inside to contamination by insults, misinformation and crazy ideas from movies and comic books; that there was no hope now of his ever engaging in a useful occupation like dentistry or carpentry; that it was inevitable now that he would grow up to be more furious nutcase in a family—a world—all of them.

James One Rockland
is a journalist

Eating Vanilla Ice Cream with Blueberries In It

If all the world was scoops of tone
Like ice cream on a sugar cone

Then full of music would be
Symphonically licked concertedly

Of intermingling cool surprise
Like spring and winter and Charles Ives

Richard Woodbridge
Deer Isle
is a financial scientist & a seaport
That Which Is Desired

In Boston, the train faced west. Their backs to the ocean, the journeymen were settling in for a long haul.

The man took his seat. The boy took his near the man, across the aisle, so that the man could glance up at him periodically.

The man had only a few things folded into a shoulder bag and small suitcase: jeans and tee shirts for around town; a set of formal clothes, just in case; razors, toothbrush, all the necessary etceteras to carry him through what would turn out to be an indefinite time. He was hastily packed but well prepared, books, notebooks, medical pamphlets, folders of work to be done. Even prophylactica; and a Bible, just in case. His ticket was one-way.

The boy had packed everything imaginable that a boy can own, everything wadded and crumpled and stuffed into suitcases, dufflebags, boxes. Most of his clothes were unwashed and dingy with the shadow of his body. He could not carry all the pieces on board with him and had to pay extra for luggage handling. His ticket was one-way as well. The boy was on his way home after spending the summer with his father in Maine.

The man was on his way to be with a dying friend.

It was late August, and pitifully hot. Squads of wild purple loosestrife, the colorful plumes held aloft, marched aggressively into the fields and wetlands which brushed by the train in great, broad blurs. It seemed that plants were taking over; sometimes the man caught sight of utility poles completely engulfed with bright orange trumpet creepers. Among hills and industrial towns the train rolled, the scenery outside the window alternately enthralling and revolting the man, as the scenery of train rides will do.

The man kept looking up at the boy, chiding himself for it while egging himself on. He thrust a finger into the novel he had been reading, a novel good enough to let the man forget the side-to-side motion of the train. The boy had hair the color of newly-hulled buckeyes, growing shaggy over his ears and eyebrows, drawing the man’s attention periodically up and away from the book and the
rocking man and the dying friend.

By sitting up right with his head flat against the headrest, the man could peer into the side of the boy's face without being detected. The boy was tender-faced and trying to grow a mustache. He seemed to be speeding in place in his seat; he thumped his leg and shifted around in his seat intermittently so that the man could see the dark hair on his stoopy thigh. The boy slid his hand down inside the back of his t-shirt and scratched himself. He had outgrown the shirt so that the sleeves curled back from his slouching shoulders. He turned his head and looked over his shoulder to scratch; his eyes swung directly into the man's gaze.

For an interval the man and the boy glanced wildly into each other. The man dashed his eyes down against his text before the boy grinned at him.

This occurred frequently and spasmodically through Worcester, Springfield, Pittsfield—the boy pretending to look around at nothing in particular, his eyes gradually roiling in by the man's eyes, the man pretending to look politely away.

The man listed these impossible frustrating circumstances. He decided that the boy did not even know what he was doing, then he threw himself into the novel the way desperate people will throw themselves down onto the tracks preceding a train. He read two lines of text, then started wondering how old the boy was. Seventeen? Sixteen? And was he just a fidgety lad waiting for someone to talk sports with him?

They pulled into Albany at one o'clock. The father and mother spoke in audible whispers and swapped despondently.

The boy leaned over and spoke to the man. He asked within a crinkling noise. "You and your wife can have these seats together because I'm here by myself and you and your wife can have these seats together because I'm here by myself and can find another seat somewhere else."

"Oh that would be super," the father said, moving his things over to the window side and motioning for his wife to come join him.

"We can't thank you enough," the woman said.

"That's OK." The boy stood tall in the aisle and took in a sweeping glance of the rest of the train. It seemed to be packed. He sat down next to the man.

"Hi, Care if I—"

"Hi, No, not at all...

The man learned that the boy's father owned a summer cottage near Sebago Lake in Maine. Through June, July, and August the boy had helped his father irrigate and shingle and paint the little house. They had fished together that summer as well and gone hiking in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. It had been the happiest summer of the boy's life. He was going home now to his mother in Ann Arbor and to school. He was happy with the arrangement—Dad in the summer, Mom the rest of the year. But he liked Maine the best. Too bad all year couldn't be a summer in Maine. He had grown close to the neighbors, other summer people whom he wouldn't see again until next summer, including a nice girl he met toward the end of his stay. They had exchanged addresses and begged each other to keep in touch.

He has a dirt bike that his father allows him to drive around on the property. He went to the balls of Michigan last winter with his mother's new husband and learned to ski. His favorite author is J. R. R. Tolkien. He loves animals, dolphins especially, and thinks he would like to go to college to be a veterinarian or a marine biologist, he can't decide which. He has no other brothers or sisters, though he has half siblings on both sides of the family from previous and subsequent marriages. He is fourteen years old.

The man leaned back in his chair and stared at the small glowing bulb of the reading lamp. He calculated: The kid was conceived right around the time the man was experiencing his first nocturnal emissions. It seemed too long ago, especially now that he had friends who were dead. He kicked off the light.

"So what time is it getting to be?" the boy asked.

The man looked at his watch. "Oh God—it's after two. Two-thirteen. You feeling sleepy?"

"Not really. I guess I'll try to sleep anyway. Two-thirteen. About where does that put us?"

"I'm not sure. Somewhere in the middle of the state.

"So you'll have to get off soon?"

"I'm afraid so.

The two curled up side-by-side in their fully-reclined chairs, their hands tucked beneath their knees, their faces toward one another. Usually passengers slept with their backs to each other, when they could sleep at all, or lying straight back in their chairs, their sleep fitful, on the stop and go. But not face to face. As the boy slept, the man lay there and blinked.

The boy opened his eyes, imperceptibly at first. He was alarmed by the man's staring, but very curious. He closed his eyes, then had to open them again, as though the man's look had pried them open. He tried to smile at the man, at the weird coincidence of them opening their eyes at the same moment, but the man only stared back quietly. There was no disdain or hostility in the stare, only quiet, dreamy attention. He asked within a crinkling noise. "You're not sure. Somewhere in the middle of the state."

"I was talking to myself."

"So you'll have to get off soon?"

"I'm afraid so."

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"I was talking to myself."
"I should have stayed in Maui and helped the old man with his pineapples," Harry Cooper shouted, whipping his convertible M.G. out of the stalled airport traffic onto the shoulder, racing ahead snarling an angry crescendo of horn blasts. He drove back in and out the other side, breaking clear in the center strip. "Jenkens' seminar this spring was a debacle. He'd turned into fucking pineapple, pricking it into everyone. We didn't realize he was sick or thought - at least I did - that he was merely sick of us or at least the bunch of shitheads who'd turned up for his seminar. Only reason I stuck with him was his idea about me doing research on Melville, making it big in the academic world."

"I've already been there," Scott. "Sometimes I'll tell you about it."

"Anyway, last Tuesday evening he's slumped there in his house. The regular seminar evening session. But this time not even the offer of a glass of wine. Then all of a sudden he stands up and tells us all to get the hell out and the old lady, Lucy his aunt, comes in and helps him up the stairs. Next morning we hear he's dead." Harry snapped the M.G. back into a narrow gap in the regular traffic lane. "I've still got my same rooms. Told administration you could stay with me. How's the old Thoreau search coming? Think you'll eventually rate a footnote?"

"Fuck you. And if we make it to the college let me off at Administration. I'm supposed to see a Mr. Schultz."

"I stopped by Jenkens' house this morning." The traffic thinned and Harry gunned the M.G. "Maybe there was something I could do to help. Lucy met me at the door. Said nobody could come in. Orders from on high. Why don't we get old Lucy drunk, steal the Whitman first edition and start us a new college. Peddled anymore of your scribbling?"

"No time for scribbling. Watch it! You've got a red light!"

"Had one."

Ahead the chapel tower of Occoala College appeared above a canopy of live oaks. On a small lake beyond a point of pines, pools promonating from opposite ends of a rowboat, two fishermen huddled motionless.

"The town moons them out every morning," Harry said, "Claims it's good for the tourist business. I stopped once and threw stones at them. They didn't even look up."

The following morning Lucy peered at Scott through the lace curtains covering the front door's beveled glass, then smiled and let him in. "It's nice seeing you again, Mr. Macleod. Byron mentioned you quite often and just a few days ago talked about his visit with you in Maine during Christmas. Mr. Schultz from Administration called and said you had permission to come in and work at Byron's desk. It was about some books he left you."

"Thank you, Mrs. Ludwig. Mr. Schultz explained things yesterday afternoon. But that's not my main concern." "Well, the package won't be delivered until tomorrow morning. They called and said around ten. I'm not quite sure how you want to arrange it."

"I'm not sure at all, Mrs. Ludwig. I'm sorry. The whole business must be quite a shock to you." Scott suddenly realized he couldn't remember ever having really spoken to her before, aside from a good evening or good night, a thank you when she passed around the sandwiches and wine at the end of the evening. "No shock at all, Mr. Macleod. Byron knew for months it was coming. He never did take care of himself."

She turned and led the way down the central hall and pushed open a heavy stopped ringing. Already a musty odor held between the book-lined walls. He crossed the room and pulled the curtains aside, let the shades all the way up and forced the two windows open. A warm soft wind from the lake brushed through the rusted screens. The yard between water and house was unmown, ragged luxuous hinging into bloom, the old boat house, long unused, leaned toward the dark water. Scott turned, rolled back the desk chair and sat down behind the cluttered desk.

Mr. Schultz had explained to him first that Professor Jenkens had left a few books and paper for Scott. It seemed Jenkens had been very precise regarding the disposal of his possessions. Mrs. Ludwig had, naturally, been given the house which he had already promised to sell to the college. There were too many alligators in the lake and she was going back to Utah. Most of Jenkens' library had been left to the college, except those left for Scott and a few other friends. And some papers called The Pisaurus File. Was Scott familiar with the file? Mr. Schultz said the library appeared in some disorder.

Scott took the file made out for him. No, he probably would have no trouble locating the books or the file. But surely the college had not brought him all the way to Florida just to pick up a few books and a file?

"You are correct, Mr. Macleod." For the first time Schultz emerged from his administrative reserve, leaning back and running a hand carefully through his clipped dark hair. A smile and the way he shook his head suggested the relief of some secret. "The fact of the matter is, Mr. Macleod, that you were asked to hurry down because Byron wanted you to bury him. No, not bury. The more appropirate word is submerge. He wants you to submerge him. Or I should say, his ashes. Here's what he wrote."

The note was centered in the middle of a sheet of typing paper, the lines printed carefully by hand in a flourish of capitals. Undated. A faint blot below his signature which could have been a smear of jelly.

Scott, The thought of being confined in a box in the ground I find repulsive. Would you be kind enough to see my ashes are disposed of in the lake sana ceremony and fake wailing. As for our dear Henry, forgive me my intrusion. The world was too much with me. Bon voyage.

"As a matter of fact," Schultz said, "I believe the transmutation is occurring just about now. They said the paperwork would be hurried through this afternoon and the ashes delivered around ten tomorrow morning."

"You'd thought he would have wanted Mrs. Ludwig to do that, the disposal. Did you ask her?"

"No, I asked him. He sent your note over four days before he passed away. Byron was of a generation that believed in not taxing female sensibilities."

Scott turned from the desk and up at the bookshelves, then pulled open the desk drawers on each side of him. He found the Pisaurus file immediately, neatly labelled and containing their correspondence, the manuscript of Jenkens' Thoreau article, a copy of Scott's monograph on Molly and Aunt Hatty, the postcard from Molly, and neatly encased in a transparent envelope, the two papers Jenkens had stolen from the Bangor Library at Christmas time. He found his books on a shelf, tied together, and was about to go ask Mrs. Ludwig for a carton when he glanced up at the wall behind Jenkens' desk. The photograph of Henry Thoreau, the original, the one he had found at Morley Perkins store and sent to Jenkens. It was not on the list Schultz had given him. Nearly framed behind glass. Scott took it down, shoved it in his briefcase and went in search of a carton. Harry should be showing up any time.

The evening before he had waited until Harry had a couple of drinks before proposing his idea. Harry tended to react negatively to the facts of this world unless properly lubricated. Harry was delighted. Of course he would help with the immersion.

"Why, what a splendid idea!" he exclaimed. "We'll bring along sandwiches and a red, no, morning you said, a white wine, Pouilly Fuisse, of course, Byron's favorite. And we won't forget a corkscrew. You could read one of your poems. No, I'll read one of mine. Mine go better with champagne even if they were not lubricated."

Mrs. Ludwig found a carton for Scott in a back hall and Harry appeared at the study door just as Scott was closing it up. He carried a wicker hamper, his face white and beads of sweat glistening just below his fair hair. Scott glanced at his watch.

"The ashes should be here anytime now. Come on out front. We'll wait on the
The phone kept ringing.

"In the stem and hold the bailer. I'll check the oarlocks."

"It's why we're supposed to do. Call if you need any help."

Scott stepped into the room, leaving the door open. After a while the phone front porch.

"I think not, old man." Harry wiped feebly at his forehead. I'll just step out back and catch a breath of cool air.

Scott went out and sat on the front steps. Just after ten a black sedan drew up. A thin, solemn man in black and wearing tri-Focals got out, reached in the back seat and brought out a small wooden box, cradled it reverently in his arms and brought it up the walk, produced a pen and paper and held the box firmly for Scott's signature. The wood was unpainted and new, smelling freshly of pine.

Scott decided against walking through the house. The sight of the box might upset Lucy Ludwig. Pushing through the unpruned shrubbery that surrounded the house, he found Harry lying in the unmown lawn near the water's edge, his head propped on the wicker basket.

Scott put down the box and walked to the water's edge. The grass didn't seem to stop there, just change species, becoming tubular with a jelly-like substance clinging to it just below the surface. When he waded in his feet sank into a black ooze from which some kind of gray, pulpy life quivered and sought deeper water.

"No, not that way," Harry said behind him. "No lake-side site and be sucked into that quagmire."

"The way you look it might be just the thing!"

Harry sat up. "A boat. I looked in the boat house window. Let's get out where there's a breeze and the water clear."

The wide door on the inner end of the boat house was not locked, merely jammed. A lower hinge pulled from the frame as they worked it open and back into the tangle of vines that climbed and clung to the sagging roof.

A lap-strake rowboat rested on its side, the varnish scabbing its hull. As they turned it over a slithering of mice skittered off into a heap of rotting deck chairs. A few beads of water were already gathering but not jammed. A lower hinge pulled from the frame as they worked it open and back into the tangle of vines that climbed and clung to the sagging roof.

"It proved impossible. The thin but hard boards were screwed firmly together and nothing to pry with. Scott rowed back to shore while Lucy bailed. Harry ran to the boat house and returned with a rusty screwdriver.

Off again, Harry placed the picnic basket at his feet and the box on knees, pried and banged it at. By the time they regained the center of the lake the box was open. Harry passed back to Lucy the neatly tied, tin-foil wrapped package. Lucy took it and hurled it into the lake where it rode again, sunlight glittering from its silver hull. Quite slippery this time as Scott edged it alongside with an oar.

"We'll just have to untie the string," Lucy said.

She took the package in her lap and fumbled with the knots. Scott bailed. Harry opened the basket and removed the bottle of Posillho Frisé

"There," Lucy said, and cast the string aside. Under the tin foil another wrapping, a canvas-like material sealed on with what looked like electricity tape which Lucy poked and gouged at with the screwdriver until it tore free and she sat staring down at a soft, white ball of cotton-like cloth from which a thin spurt of ash came as she lifted it and tossed. And once more it rode the surface but this time only briefly before sinking slowly until just below the surface where it hung suspended, a languid, pulsing jellyfish.

"Oh dear, dear, dear," Lucy murmured and looked as if she was about to cry.

"Byron would be so angry with us."

Scott lifted an oar and swung, missing, but hitting it square on his second try.

The cloth disintegrated, leaving a spreading, whitish cloud, a dissolving nimbus under which a few small fish rose, tested and vanished, unrepelled. Scott suddenly discovered the water had risen to his ankles.

"We'd better get in," he said.

Lucy began bailing. Harry abruptly flourished the bottle of wine. "But first a toast to our old mentor!" He bent over the basket and straightened to fling a handful of dripping sandwiches into the lake. "The bottle opener! I forgot the god damned bottle opener! And my poems!"

He brought the neck of the bottle sharply down on the gunwale, rose with the explosion to let the spurted liquid arch hissing over them in a swift spray, then hurled the rest of the bottle out where Byron Jenkins' ashes had now disappeared. Though Lucy continued to bail they sank some six feet from shore. One on each side, they helped her to shore.

"Well," Lucy said, turning to stare out over the lake, "it isn't exactly like the picnics we used to have in Utah."

Gordon Clark

Inverness, FL

is a retired UMA professor & founder of Karinabec
Farm Calf Scenes

Bull Calf

She'd died freakishly, my father said. We found her dead as could be in the pasture with her bull calf beside her. We tried to shoo the bull calf to the barn, but he wouldn't go. My father got a rope from the barn and put it around the bull calf's neck and we pulled on the end of the rope, but the grass was wet from the rain and we couldn't set our feet. The bull calf pulled us along the grass and I fell in the grass and my father let go. The bull calf went around the other side of the cow and nuzzled her back. My father got the end of the rope again and sent me around to push the bull calf from behind and I did and he pulled and I pushed and got him off balance and he went over on his neck again and rolled back up and heaved himself at the rope and my father ran the rope around a beam inside the door. The bull calf jumped around against the rope, but it was a big rope and my father had tied it solid to the beam.

I watched my father get a can of gas and take it out into the pasture and pour it on the dead cow and then I climbed up into the mow and into the hay so I could look out the broken window into the pasture at my father and the dead cow in the dusk and I watched my father throw a match and she went up in the middle all flames and black smoke rolled off in big shapes against the sky. The bull calf was jerking hard on his rope and I could hear the rope twanging, but it was heavy rope and my father had tied it solid to the eight-by-eight timber inside the door. My father stood back with the can of gas dangling in one hand, the other shielding his face, the light of the fire like anger or pain on his face.

Finishing the Chores

On the very last day you wouldn't have known it hurt him to see him going about his chores, chasing the cows up in the evening from the pasture and putting the rails back in the gate and going up into the barn and milking the cows and pouring the milk from the pails into the cooler and washing the pails with water from the spigot and standing beside them the milk room doorway and then washing his hands in the cold water from the spigot and coming slowly on in the house. He told me he wasn't hungry tonight and then he washed his hands again in the cast iron sink and dried them on the towel and on his shirt and then went quietly up stairs in the dark and I heard the door shut slowly and a little while later I heard the shotgun.

Jon P. Clark
Wiscasset

I was in a law student in Portland

The Exploding Man

(Part of a memoir)

After four weeks advising South Vietnamese troops in the paddies of the Mekong Delta, I was more than elated to join the American First Air Cavalry Division as it arrived in An Khe, its newly-designated home in the Central Highlands. Being a lowly lieutenant, I was almost immediately assigned to a rifle company in the Third Brigade (more specifically, the Second Battalion of the Seventh Cav—Custer's old outfit).

My brand new brethren were itching for a fight—after two months in a troopship, I might have been, too—but we had other chores before us. Our orders were simple enough—prepare the base camp for a long stay—but the job wasn't quite that easy. First, the heat was unbearable. The temperature hovered in the hundreds, and the humidity greeted us each morning with an almost drenching sweat that hung around all day. Second, behind every bush lurked the shadows of disaster. We were supposedly surrounded by Viet Cong, those devious little men in black pajamas. Whether we were, in fact, nobody really knew, but everyone was trigger-happy, especially at night, and you didn't want to wander out into the jungle all by your lonesome. Third, we didn't have much time. The Battalion Commander, in his thirst for recognition and praise, insisted that every man jack, "every swinging dick" as he so rapty put it, get out there and work on the line. So, every morning, after breakfast, the troops would grab their brush hooks, and their entrenching tools, and their axes, and their machetes, and march out onto the perimeter to cut and hack and pile brush on the fires that smoldered like garbage dumps all around us. And the men who had been "on the line," who had spent the night sitting in foxholes, staring into the darkness with all their senses keyed for enemy infiltration, they also got up, ate their C-ration, and reported to the officer in charge of the brush-clearing details to cut and hack at the undergrowth, all day, every day, until a dent could be seen in the jungle to our front.

Slowly but surely, the trees were all cut down and their branches lopped off and tossed onto the brush fires. Later, we would stoke down concertina, set barbed wire, and dig intricate defensive positions, but in the early phase of our brush cutting, all we did was clear fields of fire, and burn everything.

On this particular day, I was in charge of our right flank detail. The troops were out in the field, scrapping the area clean, and off in the distance, to the right, we could see the men of our sister battalion, men I'd never met, working on their own section of the line. I could see them clearly, five hundred yards away, small clusters of men with their own officers and their own sergeants, doing the same thing we were—with one exception.

I was standing with my radio operator and the First Sergeant, two men I would grow to love. It was mid-morning. The heat, as usual, was close to a hundred degrees, and the humidity stifling, if not unbearable. I observed the men to my front, good men all, working as steadily and hard as they could considering the time and place and conditions. I looked over at the nearest group of our neighbors—the First Battalion troops—and wondered if their morale was as low as ours, if their food was as bad, how their officers were, or their training. I saw a group of men working around a big brush fire, the kind you start up in the morning with a can of kerosene and nurse all day with brush. A gray wisp of smoke rose begrudgingly from it.

I saw, in the distance, a man with a five gallon can—perhaps it was a number ten can, open at the top, perhaps not—I saw the man take the can and toss something from it onto the fire, and then the man exploded in a ball of flame.

"Oh, my God," I said, already heading for that blazing pile of brush. As I ran to the site, other men were running there, too. By the time we arrived, someone had already radio'd for help, and it was on its way. Certainly, without that help, it would be too late.

The man, a lieutenant, impatient to get the fire burning hotter, had tossed an open can of gasoline on it. God knows how many years he had to suffer the consequences of that momentary lapse in judgment. And when I arrived at the scene, he was lying face down, his arms stretched, fully conscious of what had happened. His shirt had been burned off his body, and his back was covered with charred bits of cloth. The hair was singed off his scalp, and his lips and face were puffy and blistering. Great blisters of burned skin had already peeled off his back and were hanging from his arms and shoulders. Two men knelt helplessly at his side. One of
them was holding his hand.

- The burned man's eyes were open. He was conscious, but going into shock. He knew the gravity of his mistake, and his condition. He also knew help was on its way. Whether it arrived in time to save him I don't know. What I do remember, however, is that he lifted his head slightly, blinked his eyes, licked his blistered lips, and said, "Oh, shit."

- "Hang in there, man," I said, feeling about as useless as you can and wondering how someone who had been burned all over the top half of his body could still be conscious. He nodded. He didn't seem to be in pain. Perhaps he was too close to shock. Both, I knew, would come with a vengeance later.

I looked up and saw a Red Cross jeep barreling towards us across the stump-studded field as fast as it could go.

"I've got it now, Lieutenant," an older sergeant said to me, kneeling at the burned man's side. I didn't know him, but his eyes told me he cared. I nodded and backed away.

"There's nothing we can do here," I said to my radioman, and we turned away and walked wordlessly back to our positions.

I looked back only once. The jeep was slowly wending its way back whence it had come, with the burned man still face down, on a stretcher on the hood. A handful of shirtless G.I.'s walked beside it, holding the stretcher in place.

In recalling this flashback, I've often wondered why it sticks so clearly in my mind. I'd seen wounded men before, lots of them, but they'd all been ARVN, South Vietnamese troops, and as I'd watched their makeshift stretchers bouncing by, and the swarthy little men in them with their feet blown off or their chests crushed and bleeding, I'd felt as if I were watching a newsreel or a movie. They were just ARVN after all, Vietnamese soldiers who'd been in the wrong place at the wrong time—a man that I really knew or cared about—far removed from me.

That was then—down in the Delta. But here, in the Highlands, I'd just seen an American blow himself up, an American Army lieutenant just like me, and it shook me to the core.

I had yet to see men die. That came later, in the Ia Drang, where we lost half our people. That was when I steered myself for the long haul. It was a long haul, too, and I was lucky. But back then, in that first month of my year in the jungle, seeing that man explode was enough.

Little did I know what a harbinger it was.

S. Lawrence Gwin, Jr.
Portland
is a lawyer, who taught
at Kent's Hill School

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All The Right Moves

Washington, D.C.
August 7, 1988

Your name I locate,
Thomas B. Duffy, Jr.
on the black marble wall
right above eye level.
I touch it like reading Braille.

So many names and to each name
a death day. You died June 22, 1967.
We were born the same year
right after World War II.

I remember you Duffy,
You were a tailback.
On the sweaty bus in August,
packed three to a seat,
you told us linemen
about the time Karen
gave you a blow job.

When you come you lost control,
nearly toppled the car
in a ditch. Great reflexes,
quick moves of a tailback,
brought you back. And the night
the end of the season,
the cop caught you drunk
in the phone booth.
You told him one
with an uppercut,
the night the team was arrested,
the night we were all apprehended
you eluded them all,
the whole police force.
Amazing, just amazing moves.

You got away while we squatted in jail.
Those quick reflexes—you counted
on them to get you free and so did we
who threw blocks for you.

It was as it should always be.
Beneath the carving of names
inscribed on the wall
like some huge plaque of a team
I stand and see
you never got away entirely.
The chiseled letters
D U F F Y I touch lightly
again and again,
notice my own dark image
mirrored on the polished surface
and turn from it to walk away,
your warm flesh
on the tips of my fingers.

Bruce Spang

Readfield
educates adolescents
about substance abuse
Egan's Escape

Egan thought "Falling a thousand feet from a ledge on Tumbledown would be no different than slipping into a thousand-foot crevasse on the Matterhorn. In the end, a man would look the same in either case." He held on with both hands to a clump of scrub bushes and stared into the bowl-shaped valley; the forest changed shades before his eyes as clouds moved past the sun. He was there like he had been a day in late June—by himself on a mountainside.

For all his experience with daytrips into the Canobasset or Weld areas, at the moment he found himself in a genuine dilemma. Arriving at noon, he had followed an old woods road that led onto a false trail through marshland to a bare, untraveled side of the mountain. Confident in his ability to forge his way, he had tackled the forbidding cliff (alone and with little equipment, a "stupid thing to do," Ellen would say, and "not too wise" in the view of more tolerant friends), reached a narrow shelf a third of the way up the three-thousand-foot mountain, and discovered he could find no means of gaining another step, up or down. Not a single cleft or outgrowth allowed him purchase. He never believed it could happen, but the truth was that he was stranded.

Half an hour passed as he thrashed after a foothold he could use to move one way or another; he had paused several times to drink from the cherries he carried in his light shoulder pack. He Gibraltar into the chasm. His water was gone and his tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth. Although he ran five miles a day and hiked at least once a week in summer, which he'd always thought not bad for a man just past forty, he knew now he'd spent his energy and heightened his thirst through the flow of adrenaline induced by nerves or, he had to admit, stark fear. He managed a wry grin at the course of his reflections. Wiping his gritty face, he recalled the weather forecast he had been following an old woods road that led onto a false trail through marshland to a bare, untraveled side of the mountain. He imagined himself curled up in the night, his forearm across his mouth; he thought about hypothermia. He fancied himself a fetus-shivering, tingling on the night. Not cold enough to kill him; the cold might not have felled his way like a bear in a thicket.

But with the triumph of physical vitality came an inclination to think, to plan, to take definite measures toward releasing himself from the predicament he regarded as not only life-threatening but also humiliating. He pushed inward through the brush and reached the sheer ledge. Since he could find no means of direct, head-on ascent, perhaps he could move laterally, edging upward all the time, making each small progression a little victory in itself, moving sideways again (blocked. One thing was sure: he could not go down the way he had come up. Because of a different, poorer perspective from above, an improved ascent such as he had made could not be ascertained; movements made tentatively on the approach became virtually impossible in the descent. Just don't look down! he commanded himself.

He selected cleavage in the rock for his starting point. The angle of the grade was at least seventy-five degrees. Extending his right arm above him as far as he could reach, he jammed his fingers into the slit, lifted his left leg along the face of the cliff, and clung there a moment before feeling his right leg from the shelf. All the while, conscious of the act, he hummed "Stronger in Paradise."

He poised like a fly on a wall for a minute or more. Above, he could see no cranny for hand, foot, or knee. Four feet below was the narrow ridge from which he had stepped; beneath that, the thousand feet of space to the forest floor. He could not have seen the spot more clearly had he eyes in the back of his head. "A thousand feet," he thought in a sudden, clear vision. Closing his mind's eye with a fierce will, he hopped back and down, hands loose and ready to snatch at any protrusion. His soles landed unsaddled on the shelf. He rocked, then grabbed at a withered bush in the ledge, steadying himself gingerly without rugging at the bush, stiffening his body and his heart—and survived. To the left he saw what seemed a more precipitous route. Sideskipping in that direction, he noticed that beyond the craggy bulk at his rear was the blue sky. He lost his balance in his jump back to the shelf. He did not dwell on it. A turbulence began to bubble within him, a kind of unfocused rage, stirring him to vigorous, quickened, mindless actions. A military march-tune subdued the ballad in his head. He seemed to race against a clock, with only minutes to gain the summit of the mountain or win the prize. Scrambling to some exalted level out of his sight became his passion. Salt sweat ran from his forehead into his eyes. His physical vision grew as uncertain as his concept of his location. Prantic, though barely conscious of his despair, he succumbed and scurried and grunted until he emerged onto another plateau many yards above his starting point, the memory of how he arrived there dissolved; the strain of his ascent for a second. He leaned his head against the mountain, gasping and perspiring. It would be too late to rest, too late, to figure his next move with the calm of a man playing chess; but, the ensuing segment of his journey a fifty-degree slab of red rock, he bent his weight to the incline and crabwalked upward.

Funny, he thought, that for all his attraction to mountain climbing, he was a man afraid of heights. He wouldn't be caught dead on a ladder or a roof. Yet, now he knew he was defying the odds of logic or sense with each step. One misjudgment would be the end. The great chasm into which he refused to glance, (but which was most accurately there), seemed a step short or silent, eternal patience. Still, if he hurried he could rush for the safety of the summit and attain it before any misfortune occurred. It was like running in the rain without an umbrella, he thought, without his breath. He resumed his ascent, halting with purpose. His mind was on that aspect, that moment only, of his life. He had made the effort; he would extricate himself; no ignominious rescue by a chain dangling from the sky for him. The chanting and song issuing from his lips was like the background drone of a radio to a man painting his house.

As he labored, he became increasingly reckless. Often he would swing his arm like a grappling hook and claw with his fingers at crumbly ledge, hoping there would be some small roughness for him to seize; sometimes he gripped only the flaky scales of mountainside, but through prayer or blind fortune, he was always able to shift his weight across the fulcrum of his body's center, up and forward, before his grasp disintegrated to reveal the futility of its substance. Once, after halting five minutes to arrange a tactic, water streaming into his ears, he sucked in his breath and leaped to his right for a tiny rock-step barely large enough for the toe of his boot. The front edge of his foot struck six inches below the cornet, steepled over and outward—ended down—and caught the lip of the crevasse...
Throughout his struggle he could not define the dull rhythm that throbbed between his ears. A certain dire knowledge wedged into his mind, a knowledge conveyed in song, pieces of songs from a lifetime of songs, and established an attitude, a mood, of concurrent hope and despair. He had set out on his rush for the summit with a red face, but in his progress a dim reflection concerning his status in the world encroached upon his awareness. Images: Ellen, Annie, his workaday life, heartpains of regret revealed in dreamlike waves of vaporous heat. By the time he neared his goal the musical throb in his soul drove him onward, tirelessly at the end, toward a denouement, a cymbal crash of conclusion.

The sun loomed directly before him, half shielded by the western hills, and after he crossed the final ledge, twenty degrees or less, he came to rest in a patch of long grass. To the east, below him, he could see the ridge leading to where the familiar trails met near the pond. The access route to civilization, to the world where he lived. He had made it. For minutes a placid satisfaction comforted him, yet no song of triumph repressed the demanding, primeval rhythms in his sense.

No one would know the terror he had endured. It was true that he had accomplished his goal with a flair; he would not have to be airlifted from the mountain like a casualty of war.

Now, it appeared, his life would revert to normal. He had "climbed Tumbledown up", thinking that, he thought of Annie. Hot tears eroded the grime on his face. No—his life would not be the way it had been before. The beat blared in his ears with the fury of native drums, the jumble of songs both familiar and improvised, accompaniment to his rushing thoughts. Slipping off his shoulder pack, he started to walk westward, away from the trails, the pond, and the world of safety.

He came to a narrow finger of rock hanging over the chasm. Pausing, he stared into the valley three thousand feet below. He placed his hands over his ears, pressing, trying to still the disharmony of sound.

"Annie... Annie!" he called, shouting to hear himself above the din. "Honeygirl, I did it! I climbed Tumbledown up, and I did it the hard way!" He rubbed the heels of his hands. He felt very weary and very sad.

Looking up, avoiding the prying sun with his gaze, he took a leaping step forward, cleared the ledge, and began the plunge that would quiet forever the roaring in his head.

Stewart Goodwin
Farmington
Teaches at Mt. Blue H.S.


Tarry-Town

Oh, let us go to Tarry-Town,
To "come, let us be merry"-town,
To "come, and let us marry"-town;
It's but a mile or five;
And you will wear your crooked smile;
Your grimace of a crocodile
Who eats his young alive.

Yes, let us go to Tarry-Town,
And I will wear a linen gown
With dogwood garlands hanging down,
And life will be so fine:
We'll dance upon the cobbled street
Our smiles will curdle in a frown,
And pickle us in brine.

Our smiles will curdle in a frown,
Our eyes turn up, our mouths turn down;
Though life is sweet in Tarry-Town,
Our flesh is sweeter still, they've said,
And we will die in Tarry-Town,
And so will all our kind.

Hilda Grant Jones
Hallowell
writes in the field of communications

David's Guitar

is of the shiniest wood
silver strings produce
chord after chord
of pure heaven, the
bristled neck strap's
a harness, holding in
wild notes not suited
to this crowd, and it
bleeds down David's arm
dripping red and green
sweat onto jeans that
have seen better days
than this hot one that
causes the wood to melt
into his fingers, the
strings to flash colors
and man and instrument
to throb into one being
as the sun beats time
with David's ragged boots.

Donna Carter
Orono
teaches at UM
d

A few before ten

and I'm in a cold antechamber
of Filene's in South Portland
with a strange pair of canary
yellow alligator
shoes and a green plastic slacker
on a bleached-blond doll who's in a tizzy over
being asked to wear a bit
by a security guard just inside
the door another
two minutes because he can't
open the joint until he gets
the nod.

And doesn't she have a choice
word or two for him—through me,
apparently.

Mikael Larsson
Gorham
punky whiskers, jiggles, watches stars

Easter Monday

The swarm in the bush sings into
The fog, pauses, and sings again,
Pauses, and sings, and pauses,
Hearing what unheard of
Sweetness pulling him or her
From the bush into the fog

Hugh Henney
Portsmouth, NH

Best Western Blues

after a song by Bessie Smith

Third day, bathrooms first. That TV
commercial for the Negro College Fund,
some old mother on her knees all
night scrubbing floors. She's schooling
some kid. Makes it worth this.
Not exactly my story. You get a
young smart husband through. He
turns around, looks at you.
Nothing in common anymore he
apologizes. Some young girl from
one of his classes hanging on
his mind's arm, urging him away.
You're a college dropout for nothing. The
no credit course in irony. I
think about these things. Polish my
face faceless in the chrome.
Worry the scars away, corner of
my storage, fingernail backup. Got to
push against something, see it move.
Office next. Secretaries in
dancing dresses whisper away from
my vacuum. My big fat hose
snaking respectfully around their
fuck me shoes.
Check for suction. Tug that
heavy stupid body behind this
mumbling one. Covers
one condescending smile. I'm ignominious. You
think you see me, pushing wet hair from my
face with a dusty hand. Lobby's next. You
don't see me. Once I told you a joke so funny
you cried. Looked so pretty you whistled.
Loved you so well you said you'd never leave.
First, empty ashtrays. Polish them
dirty with my smoke. Out across the parking
lot last, looking for wind in my face, and
trash. My mind turns on my record nose.
Song is waiting, needle comes down. "I'm as
good as any woman in your town."

Therese Martin MacDonald
Portland
runs on Munjoy Hill
You know, Bill, I've been thinking about that conversation we had after the skeleton was stolen from the Art Department. As you heard, they were very upset about it. For one thing, to replace it, her—Emily she'd been for years, though no one remembers why—would have cost thousands of dollars. For another thing, something about her loss made everyone very sad. Over the years each teacher, and most students, had come to have enormous respect for the delicacy of her bone-structure. She must have been slight, thin, proportionate to her five-foot height. The assumption was that she had come from India, though that may have been just a reading-in from her burnished surface—the tone of a Rembrandt like the last self-portrait, as we know it now, with the varnish darkening.

We started talking about that part, replacement costs, and the politics of that—how the dealers in Calcutta and Benares approach the poor and entice them to sign, not necessarily for themselves, and then how they keep in touch, toward the end following the walking skeleton until it drops in the street, when they cart it off quickly, before the family can renegotiate and try to cremate or whatever.

Of course you're right, that whole side of it is just an ugly, embarrassing remnant of colonized exploitation, but I've been uneasy with your solution—a completely accurate and relatively inexpensive skeleton of plastic. I don't think it would work. It seems to me that when the teacher brought Emily out of the closet for the drawing classes, anatomy was only the surface of the study. Let's not get into sign/signifier/signified; the world is confusing enough without semiotics, but it's not a new idea, nor a French one, that the confrontation of mortality deepens art. Sure, those kids, every generation, are singing, *sotto voce,* "Toe bone connected to the foot bone," but that's because they're damned uneasy. Plastic wouldn't do it.

Which is not to say we should be starving the third world for our students' benefit. It seems to me we must have plenty of skeletons right in this country—bums and bag-ladies obviously, frozen to death in doorways, though to deepen the effect I'd think an occasional stock-broker would be good, or maybe a painter who'd hanged himself.

Emily was returned, by the way. Whoever took her, for whatever purpose, must have felt something from those delicate bones, because he carefully undid all the little wire hooks, and, eyes, packed her disassembled in a cardboard box, and paid a fair amount of money to ship her back to Orono. The postmark was Brunswick—no return address. So she's home again, and back together, or if not home at least where generations remember her, draw her carefully, sing to her softly in a language she'll never understand.

Sylvester Pollet
E. Holden
teaches and edits at UMO
November

Without his teeth the old man lies breathing with difficulty through his mouth. The family lounges about the bed. The inefficacious doctor checks for signs. The old man needs a shave. His grey cheeks suck, puff as his eyes hang onto me. His liver-spotted brow is grey and slick with sweat. I wipe his face, smooth the strands of grey hair back neatly on his head. His sweat has soaked the pillow. The nurse brings supper. I feed him only the vanilla ice cream. She comes again after the family leaves and changes the sheets and pillow case. At three-twenty a.m. he's gasping slowly, and I lean close, peering into his eyes to see what he sees.

Roland Burns
Fort Kent

\textit{Monoprint by Karen Gilg}

Love Poem

Because I asked,
You left
Your dress hanging
In my closet.

There's no door.
Just myself and air
And a dress shaped
Like a woman.

Your breasts have disappeared.
Your long legs
Walk naked
In other rooms.

You've pulled your hands
Inside your sleeves,
The closet is so cold,
So open.

My eyes grow thin
Looking for you.
What fine hands
Traced you into this cloth?

\textit{Doug Woodsum}
Corea
\textit{works at Bread Loaf}

Muzak's Top Ten - #3

Let's wait in this room forever.
The wallpaper music croons:
Hidden speakers surrounding us tacitly sounding
Insipidly calming tunes —
A gentleness, foamy slumbering.
Dissolving our minds away,
So let's sit in these chairs, insulated from cares,
And wait while we slowly decay.

Let's wait in this room forever,
For "forever and a day,"
While the ceiling grows moss and the spiders spin dross
And the muted saxophones play:
For life's an eternal waiting
And death's a perpetual sleep;
And it feels just like years when you're bored unto tears —
So let's sit here, and wait, and weep.

Nick Humez
Portland
is a silversmith
\textit{(A setting for voice & piano is available from composer Humez)}
Generic Art

She makes a poor copy of plain:
pockmarked, streaked hair
drooping to stooped shoulders,
skirt hem avoiding scarred shanks.

When I broke silence she talked
like I’d unleashed her tongue,
frenzied words lapping my ears,
eyes following mine as if game
were hiding behind my lashes.

Somehow the health food order
got totaled and she wanted
nineteen dollars and eighty-two
cents to settle up.

She made the change in my palm,
knuckles of her middle finger
sliding along my outstretched lifeline,
telling me she had
time on her hands.

Glenn McKee
Waterville
writes, travels & contemplates

Honoring Anger

Beets! Their bright stain on the cutting board.
I chop them into pieces, bite-size, bring to a boil,
then simmer till tender. Easy to chew.
Easier to chew. But it’s not easy chewing on anger.
So I spit out poison. Begin again from scratch.

I’m the alchemist, searching for a cure. Opened, these beets
amortized my pain, concentrating the root of my being;
I boil anger down to the source, listening for its urgent message.
Unvoiced, it could blow up in my face. I distill
one clear note from rising vapor. Then another. Lured
by a new song, I dive into the crimson broth.

It colors me to the bone.
I become blood, life, the sacred hearth.
I have many bowls, a cauldron of soup. It could consume
the muted world, give a tongue to all who need to speak.

Jennifer Lyons
Portland
processes insurance claims

Nancy Devine
Waldoboro
is learning to draw
Ray didn’t know about Edward; he didn’t know about Billy, or maybe he did; maybe he knew too much about him to understand what might happen. But he understood about Billy’s mom, Mrs. Thirst, and how she died eight months ago in the beginning of March, as if she couldn’t stand to see the spring again, the April showers that seemed to wash everything away, give everyone, everything a new slate, one more chance.

But no one could blame her. It was hailing that night, and maybe she shouldn’t have gone, but she did, because it was Wednesday, double-coupon night at the Village Market. Some thought she just fell into an old trap, trusting that habit was somehow more important than bad luck. Ray didn’t know; he didn’t even really care. All that mattered was that she went out for a gallon of 2% milk, some barbecue chips, two cartons of cigarettes, and the cat food she should have gotten the Wednesday before, and never did come back.

Ludlow was the only town in Maine where it would rain all day, then had and snow all night on the first of March. Even on the north and west ends of town it had only rained, some fraction of a degree difference in temperature or air pressure, something. Chances were that slim.

Mrs. Thirst left at 7:30 that night, not saying a word on her way out the door, if there had been anything to say, anyways. By 10:00 pm, when Ray was getting ready to go home, George Thirst started to dial friends up, asking if his wife had stopped over on the way home from the market that had just closed three miles away. He had just given Billy a new slate, one more chance.

She went in a huff after his second call, and a laugh the same as Ray, who called over as he slipped on his yellow rain slicker and opened the door to leave: "*Don’t worry, Mr. Thirst,* she’ll turn up.”

She did. They found her a week later, drowned in the stream that ran under the County Road one-eighth of a mile from her house, her car turned upside-down in the stream,usted through the ice. The heavy snow late that night piled up almost a foot, covering the Subaru’s tracks over the bank, collecting on the boughs of the evergreens that overhung the stream, making a dome over the car that none would see through it melt; even not even George Thirst, driving over the cement bridge that spanned the stream thirty seconds after he pulled out his driveway, passing his wife every day, going to the police station in town. It all started on a Sunday. That Thursday temperatures skyrocketed to almost fifty degrees, and everyone figured the winter had died.

It was cool in the locker room. A door ajar, it was empty now, except for Billy Thirst, Coach, looking around the room. Except for the other showers, still pouring out hot water, he was alone. It was hard to believe, with the stream crammed into the room, and the heat, that on the other side of the cinder block walls was the late fall, and just on the other side of that, winter.

Only basketball season reminded him of where the world was, the only thing the steam couldn’t obliterate.

"*Let’s go, Crumple!*"

"*O.K., Coach!*"

The door opened and shut again, Coach’s bald head withdrawing into the outer room. Ray turned off the empty showers, and walked out.

It was cool in the locker room. A door 90 degrees from the shower room door, on the adjoining wall, open to the back parking lot. Everyone left through there when their rides swung into the lot, and tonight, when they did, the November wind blew in.

Long fluorescent light sunk into the ceiling threw artificial light that turned the green locker room into a line. It was empty now, except for Billy Thirst, Coach, and the team’s manager, Edward Tate, who was sitting in the middle of the floor beside a pile of uniforms and a black trunk, checking off numbers on the jerseys to make sure they were all there for tomorrow night’s opener against Frye.

"Crumple!*"

"*I’ll send Billy's dad to get the gym bag. He glanced up, caught Ray’s elbow, pointed to Frye. ‘Coach came out of his office. ‘You see, Billy?‘ He gave him rides home after practice some nights. Billy’s dad worked late, and had the only car, now that the Subaru was gone.

Billy flicked his jersey over to where Edward Tate was sorting them in the middle of the floor. The uniform just missed Edward’s owl head.

Coach went towards the back door, and Billy got up and followed. He looked tired, dragged his gym bag by the shoulder strap, his sneakers scuffing across the green rug.

Coach stopped in front of the door. "*Night, Edward.*" Edward didn’t answer, just nodded his big head. "*Ray!*"
"Yeah!"

"Get right home tonight. Get some sleep."

Beth was picking him up after she got out of work. Coach knew they'd been going out for almost a year. He understood the score.

"O.K." Ray watched him push out the door. "See you tomorrow, Billy," Billy looked back, rolled his eyes in a way that said tomorrow, then disappeared.

As soon as the door shut, Edward jammed the rest of the uniforms into the trunk without checking their numbers. Ray fumbled the combination to his locker—36 left, 11 right, 36 left. It fell open. Inside, his clothes sagged off the metal hooks. He didn't think he could make them look any different by getting into them. It seemed like too much of an effort to try. He wanted to crawl inside the locker, shut the door and wait for tomorrow night. Edward jumped up. He was here late tonight. Ray pulled on his sweatshirt. "You nervous?" He slid on his jeans.

Edward looked at him as if he was being accused. "About what?"

"Tomorrow." Ray stepped into a pair of old sneakers. "The game."

"No."

Everyone was nervous. "How come?"

"We'll win." He sounded sure.

"What do you figure the score'll be?"

"Sixty-seven—fifty-nine." The words spilled out. Edward looked away. He scuffed the rug with his Hush Puppies, drove his hands into the pockets of his loose corduroys. Ray laced up his Hush Puppies and looked back up to Edward. He was walking in small circles in the middle of the locker room floor now, picking up speed.

"Thought you weren't nervous?" Ray asked.

Edward stopped. "You wanna play?"

"What?"

"A game of OUT."

In the terms of Edward Tate's life all hell was breaking loose. Ray had never seen him play a game of one-on-one, or OUT, or even shoot a ball since he started managing the team back in the fifth grade. His father, Freddie Tate, held the Ludlow High scoring record since twenty-two years ago. With Edward it was one of those things, the needed gene never passed on. That he'd been born too skinny, too awkward, too passive to play was the luck of the draw. Ray was going of those things, the needed gene.

Edward led Ray into the locker, shut the door and wait for tomorrow night. Edward was going to go check for Beth. But he didn't. He couldn't walk away from a game, or Edward, acting like he was just back from tomorrow.

Edward was walking, bumpy-jerky, around the arc that made the top-of-the-key. Ray kept turning to face him. "How about Billy?"

Edward ran a hand through his wiry hair. He scratched his oval head. "No. Not Billy."

Ray handed him the ball. "Why not?"

Edward took it, then stepped away from Ray, bent down and loosened one of the laces of his Hush Puppies just to retie it. He did the other, then looked up. He was going to lose it. Ray could see the tears welling up in Edward's eyes. Edward started back down at the floor, relaid one of his shoes again, then whispered up to Ray, like he was making a confession: "Motorcycle crash."

They were both quiet then. Ray waited for him to laugh even though it looked as if he was going to cry. But Edward didn't do either, just stood back up and took another step away.

"Hey, Edward..."

He took another step.

"Edward." Christ, he looked pale.

"Sorry, Ray."

He felt cold and hated Edward for that, for the chill going through him now, after the muggy shower.

"...I dreamed it, last night, about all of you."

"Billy?"

Edward nodded. The hand that wasn't holding the ball trembled. It wasn't true. Ray knew that. He threw a half smile at Edward. "Just a dream, right?"

"No..." Edward still whispered, as if they had a secret between them. Edward forced another smile. He'd done that a lot tonight. "Dreams... make you believe, sometimes."

Edward looked worse. He shook. "Ray, it was... I saw, I know it."

"Jeet, take it easy. Ed. It was just a dream."

"I can't say anything to him."

"For Hobecoton? Jeet, Ed, you know..." Edward stood four steps closer to half court than Ray, with the basketball tucked under one arm, his lips quivering. Ray picked it up, bouncing under the basket, and walked out into the corner. Edward passed him as they exchanged places. "That was something," Ray said.

Edward looked away. He bit his fingernails. He never did that.

From up on the bleachers, Ray looked down on the hoop. It seemed small, impossible to ever fit the basketball in his hands through. Still, he let it fly, and actually it came pretty close, but caught the top of the backboard and sailed to the other side of the gym.

Ray climbed down from the stands, crossed to the top-of-the-key. Edward got the ball and carried it over. He looked at Ray. "U."

"We could use you for last second shots," Ray smiled. "Could make the difference in the tournaments, at the buzzer."

"We'll lose in the tournaments."

Ray laughed.

"We'll lose." Edward was looking all over the gym now, down at his feet, at the basket, the bleachers, the base-line. It looked as if he was going to start walking in circles again.

"Yeah! What round?"

"Semi-finals."

"To who?"

"Dover. One of their forwards," and now he considered for a second, "Willy McGuillicuddy'll hit a twenty-five-footer."

"With how much time?"

"Three seconds." Edward was staring at the floor, like he was talking to himself, figuring things out. He shook his head. "I'll be something."

Ray laughed again and Edward jerked his head up. He looked bad, nervous, but Ray wanted to see how far he could push this.

"Am I going to play college ball, Ed?"

Edward dropped his eyes again. "For Hobecoton."

"Yeah! Hobecoton was a small division III school in the southern end of the state that picked up the regional talent that couldn't give the game up, but weren't good enough to make the bigger schools."

"You'll be great." He didn't sound too excited.

"How about everyone else?"

Edward started tugging his mails again, looking all around. His face was screwed up tight, his eyelids swollen a bit. "Don't think so."

He was winning. Ray kept thinking about that. He was winning and should have been high as a kite, but wasn't. That should have told Ray to quit asking questions that he knew Edward couldn't answer but had, to give up the game and go check for Beth. But he didn't. He couldn't walk away from a game, or Edward, acting like he was just back from tomorrow.

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really wanted to leave now. “Hey, I’m sorry Edward, it’s just, well, a dream.”

Edward walked backwards to half court. “I bet you in a game of O.U.T.”

Without looking more than once he threw up a clumsy hook shot. Ray followed it until it banged off the backboard and went in. Edward looked at him for the last time. “Just throw ‘em in from anywhere... couldn’t miss.”

The ball bounced back out, rolling by the time it reached Ray. He grabbed it up and went to half court. His hands were damp. He wiped them on his jeans and did his best to line up the shot. No one could really line up a half court hook. No one could line up any of the shots Edward had made.

He let it go, hard, but to give it a chance. The ball looked on line most of the way, sailed up on a nice arc, but in the end came down a little to the right. It jammed itself between the rim and backboard, sounding, in the empty gym, like a small cannon. That was it. O-U-T. He’d never lose in three shots before. Never.

He looked over to Edward, who was near the sidelines now, watching the ball, his hands stuffed back into his pockets, and Ray was sure, finally crying.

“Nice game.” He just wanted Edward to go home, or for Beth to come and get him. “O.K. Edward! Nice game.” Edward wasn’t blubbering, anyway. Ray wanted to thank him for that much. He wouldn’t even mention anything in school tomorrow, if Edward would just leave. He even felt sorry for him, saying all those things, talking like some sawed off. Edward hadn’t beaten him. They’d make a deal. Mum’s the word. “Listen, Ed...”

“Maybe he’ll do it himself.”

Ray stared at him while Edward stared at the floor. “What?”

Edward’s shoulders heaved. They were hunched, and Ray could hear him grabbing small breaths between his sobs. “If it’s not an accident.”

It wasn’t a question. Ray remembered that later in the night, when he couldn’t sleep. Edward told him. He tried to say something else, but Ray cut him off, asked him “why?” probably just to shut him up. It didn’t matter, Edward couldn’t take it anymore, anyway. He ran through the orange locker room door. Ray looked up at the wall pinched between the rim and backboard, heard the door where the metal clicking against the frame, and wondered how come he’d asked the “why”; how come he was that stupid, to ask a question only two people could answer, Edward being neither of them.

He turned and ran into the locker room then, threw open the door, as if force might swing things his way. The room was empty, so he went out the back door and shoved that open. Out there, just going out of sight of the few arc-lamps, Edward was still running home.

“EDWARD!” but even then he was out of sight, “WHEN!” the wind blowing from different directions, gusting, scrambling his words. He let go of the door, watched the outline of thin birch trees beyond the parking lot, bare, being whipped around, holding up but in trouble, as if the chill wind hadn’t decided how much damage it wanted to do on another night in November.

Ray waited in the locker room for Beth to pull into the lot. He turned out the fluorescent overheads, so he could see the car’s headlights through a small window above the door when she swung in.

The room was nearly silent. Pipes settled behind the green walls, ticking. Sometimes he would hear the gym creak, like bones popping. He stayed put, perched up against the lockers, thinking back to the day of the accident, to that afternoon. School had gotten out early for teacher’s conferences. He and Billy drove out to Billy’s house to eat lunch and shoot some foul shots in his driveway.

Ray could see the two of them busting through the front door, up the pantry steps and into the kitchen, where they found Mrs. Thirst kneeling on the blue-tiled floor, hundreds of foul shots spread out in front of her in a long arc, all of them in black-and-white, of Billy before and during the different ball games he’d played as a kid, and as he got older, all the way up to last season. Ray was in them, too.

She’d taken a picture of them together, before the first game every year since the fourth grade. Those were there, along with the rest, all different poses of Billy, shooting a foul shot or racing for a fast break he may or may not have scored. She would have known. It was like a colorless rainbow spread across the kitchen floor, Billy and Ray getting older as it curved towards the base of the refrigerator.

She stared up at them, her eyes red-rimmed, wiping her nose with the sleeve of her sweatshirt, and then looked back down at the pictures, and back up, and down as if she were trying to decide which was real.

“Get the hell back indoors,” she said, dropping her head, touching the gloss on the photos, as if it were skin. They crept backwards, went away for the rest of the afternoon, until supper, until that night.

“Hi!” Beth kissed him for a long while in the empty lot. “Miss me?”

“You know it.” The car’s fan blew hot air into his chest. The radio glowed green, spilling something soft into the front seat.

She kissed him again, her breath like spearmint, then threw the Nova into drive. It halted them out of the lot. Beth slipped her hand over the top of his, steering with the other. “You have a chill.”

“What?”

“Your hand is shaking.”

“Yeah.”

Even before he knew it was raining, it was. Small pellets bounced off the windshield in a soft pippipip. Beth slowed to a crawl. He tried to remember if this had been in the forecast.

“God.” She whispered the word. Ray loved her voice. It was soft as the glow from the radio.

“Hi!”

“It got so slippery...” she stared at the road ahead of her, the sleet coming in at an angle, “so fast.”

He thought about that. He thought about tomorrow, the score of the game, about Willy McGuillicuddy throwing in a twenty-five footer at the buzzer to take them out of the tournaments in February. And though he tried not to, he drifted off to Mrs. Thirst, back to that afternoon, the way she looked, as if she couldn’t go on with the day, not five more minutes, not one.

But whatever else her life had been, it had been all right. Ray believed that.

There would have been other things, college friends for Billy to bring home; parent’s weekends; long earned vacations with her husband; the slow decay of life, the sweetening. And they still had this last season to play yet. She wouldn’t have missed that. That afternoon, one sad afternoon, her memories spread in a black-and-white rainbow, close enough to touch, to arrange, to reverse.

She saw it finally, while Beth eased over Route 3, Mrs. Thirst somehow believing, even while the Subaru sank under the ice, black water seeping in through tiny cracks no one knew about, that she would be all right, wanting it, because she was a young woman, not even forty yet, and unable to understand how she could get old so fast. Thirty-nine, fifty, eighty, one-hundred; she was aging that fast in the end, maybe not understanding it until there wasn’t a thing left to figure out.

And Ray thought about Billy, how he wouldn’t be on his motorcycle again until the spring. “Damn.”

“What?...”

He looked over at Beth. She glanced at him, then they both started out the front windshield, the hail coming down, pippipip. “I hope this ends.”

Edward didn’t come to school. He didn’t go to the game. Before they went out for warm-ups, Ray asked Billy how he was feeling.

“O.K.”

He was quieter, under control.

Even tired, Ray played all right. By the end of it he had fifteen points. Billy netted twelve, and they were beating Frye by almost twenty. It was going to be some year.

With ten seconds left, Billy threw a pass to Ray at half court. He let a hook shot fly to end the game, which, to the pleasure of the home crowd, went in, making the final 67-49. Ray looked up to the scoreboard—67 (in electric red bullets), to 49 (in electric blue). The crowd flowed from the bleachers. Billy ran up to him.

“Some shot!”

Ray hesitated, then put his arm around Billy’s neck. “Your mom,” and like Edward stared at the floor. “I’m sorry, Billy. Fucking accident.”

Billy jerked to get away. Ray tightened his hold. Two Frye fans walked across the court past them. “Look at the faggots, Marve.” Marve looked.

“I’m sorry.” He had him good and tight now, squeezing Billy’s neck so he had to bend over to Ray’s height. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry.”

Billy relaxed some, and so did Ray’s hold. They looked at each other, the crowd brushing past, some of the LaSalle fans putting them on the back as they left. Billy had a look only Ray knew for sure, and he wanted to give a cheer before it became something and his best friend threw up all over him, giving everything he had.

Greg Palmer
Iowa City, Iowa
is from Carmel & UMD &
in Iowa Writers’ Workshop.
Walking to the Moon

It floats a foot above the line of poplars
So familiarly pale, so accessible
they might go there, she prays,
"just crossing the gulf of air,
carefully upon the wings of fireflies."

It is their moon, these lovers,
lighting the blue hands of wheat,
the white asters he had braided in her hair
above the cape they wear as one
to clock their hands.

He slows to blend anew their steps
as playful chimes of voice
soften to no more than breath.
Turning into him, she feels the wool
slip off her shoulder,
the sudden feather of the night.

Near, a dog has rolled upon their path
and risen as a moment of ice,
believing what it sees.

David Adams
Edinboro, PA
taught at UMO & UMF

Wheel Dreams

"If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face..."—Wilfred Owen

Each night of the full moon my dreams
reinvent Wilfred Owen’s wagon wheel
only to hoist it up forged anew
above the fairgrounds
to carry our ripest youth
over the carnival and into the night air
where fingering the stars
and devouring the lusty fireworks
they never fall to feel too late
the wheel turn
to drop them off one by one
into some jungle
where the meat wheel squeals
like a buzz saw through green pine
devouring the moon and eating its teeth
on their screams.

Doug Rawlings
Mt. Vernon
teaches at UMF

Bulldancing

Men and women don’t bull dance together
in Crete anymore,
nor since young Theseus, the coward,
slew their mother in her bed.
Their arms hang flaccid, their breasts sag
in dumb mourning.

Their brains, grown grotesquely huge,
clog rage in their throats.
Watching over shoulders for their parents’ ghosts
they leer fearfully at each other
and curse themselves, dry tongued,
in the labyrinthine dark.

But lately there is guarded talk of some people
who shed their black clothes.
They practice leaps and vaults, no fear
of falling into the sea.
In the old palace remnants they are learning
to touch the bull as he turns.

Lyle Dennett
Rockport
builds houses

To The Collection Agency

I would answer your letters of
disappointment, but I have no
money to buy stamps, though I will
put this message in a bottle and
drop it off at sea. In a hundred
years the bottle will become
antique and be worth a lot more
money than I owe you. I have just
now emptied the bottle and am
proceeding as planned.

Pat Murphy
Portland
runs Out-of-Print Books
The line between City and Country is vague but real. We city folk think we have Mother Nature under control. We've cut down the trees, paved over the earth, and lit up mile after mile of road. But the Old Lady isn’t licked. She’s waiting out there to tweak the nose of the unwary.

We headed for Maine and a woodlands vacation. Three cars, four adults, nine assorted children, berries, set snares for small game that we never caught, baked whole. Nature. Live off the land. Nothing too extreme. We weren’t forest, when the fishing gear and enough chocolate to supply a regiment for a month. We cabin on a hill and settled in.

Of the great outdoors. Do not coincide.

Sometimes the hopes of Man and the game conditions set by Nature do not coincide. Tropical weather arrived. The thermometer rose and the rain came down. And it rained - and it rained - and it rained. The camp-out was canceled. We huddled together in the shelter of our cabin. Water crept in through unsuspected cracks and openings, filled every hollow and every crevice. It ran down the slopes and dripped from the trees. Every furrow in the ground became a stream. Sodden, sudden, wet, wind whipped, rain. Everywhere! Not since the family of Noah had anybody seen so much water.

After two days of soggy, rain-induced relaxation, the inmates of the cabin began getting restless. Wet firewood filled the cabin with smoke. The inexhaustible chocolate supply was almost gone.

In the few spare moments that their hands could have broken the great outdoors, were gone. Darkness closed in again. Sometimes later, a pick-up truck with Maine license plates eased down the hill and stopped next to me, a confident country-ready vehicle, happy as a pig in the mud. These are the size of ferris wheels. A ten point buck could have passed under its chassis without removing its antlers. A concerned neighbor rolled down his window and asked if I was alright. I assured him that help was on the way and he sped off.

Lesson Number One in Rules of the Great Outdoors was beginning to sink in to my Clifed居 mind. I wasn’t prepared. I had no business being out there in that car. I had regular tires, two-wheel drive, and the ground clearance of a dachshund. They were moving. I was stuck.

How long I sat there, I don’t know. I was alone but not lonely. I resolved not to look at my watch and let time pass at its own pace. The resolution made me feel better, as if I were striking a blow for civilization against the wilderness. Exactly how, I’m not really sure.

The tow truck burst from the darkness, lights flashing like a runaway pinball machine, Car Number Two following sheepishly behind. "Don’t look too stuck to me," said the Country man. He had on a baseball cap and greasy one piece striped coveralls.

"Six strong men pushed while my wife sat behind the wheel," I quipped.

The tow truck driver didn’t think that was funny. He didn’t think anything was funny. He wasn’t any happier to be called out in the middle of the night than I was to be there. He glared at me.

Lesson Number Two for surviving in the Wilderness: Never fool around with the man driving the tow truck.

"Not much reason to get stuck here," he said.

"I realize that," said City humbly.

He climbed into my car and fiddled with the gears but the car wouldn’t move for him either. (For which strangely enough I was grateful.) "Believe me, I didn’t want to do it. But believe me, I’m stuck. Maybe I’m not used to country driving."

"Maybe." He set his truck on stable ground a good distance back and uncoiled a thick steel cable. The truck man then lay down in the mud, fastened a tin baseball cap and greasy one piece striped coveralls. "Six strong men pushed while my wife sat behind the wheel," I quipped.

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"Maybe." He set his truck on stable ground a good distance back and uncoiled a thick steel cable. The truck man then lay down in the mud, fastened a hook under the rear bumper of my car and reeled me in like a great blue tin fish on a line. I signed the required papers, paid the bill and expressed my thanks.

"You ought to be able to turn around here. It’s pretty solid." His red, white and blue lights flashed in the night and he was gone, like the Lone Ranger.

I’ve seen TV commercials in which the driver on a stormy night in the woods comes nose to nose with Mother Nature and is saved by a light that never fails - or tires that grrrrrrrrrrp the road. Those ads never meant much to me before. I never understood what that man was doing out there on that road, in that terrible weather, in the first place. Now I know.

He was coming home from bowling. Richard Newman

NYC is a building contractor.
Little Boy Blue

It's a Miami Vice kind of world nowadays. You know, Jona sun (Miami) and lots of screwing around (Vice). I can't quite decide which I like better. Probably more screwing around.

I met this woman at a company I used to work for. I say woman because I was around twenty-five and she was a little over thirty. At the time we kept it quiet. It was time when old geezers could have dinner in public with barbie dolls and everyone laughed thinking about their sex life. An older woman seen looking admiringly at a younger guy got five years to life. Everyone laughed around meetings.

I used to doodle in the wet spots the ice water under my chair, and I watched them coming and going, and the fantasies I'd dream up. I assumed one of the men had dropped his little book back. I sat back down in my chair to see if there was anything suitable for Saturday night. Her voice was quiet but penetrating.

"Give me the book," Arthur, "she said in my ear. I handed it over. For a minute there I thought my mother had come back from the grave. My hands were sweaty, but that's nothing new. I think guys have perpetually sweaty palms until they are at least forty. By then the glands start to dry up.

"Sonny," I stammered. I lost my balance in trying to rise with the chair still pushed in, and plunked back down hard. The jolt banished my thoughts of her.

"Well, here I am, Arthur," said Myla. Her hair was so black, First woman I'd ever seen with blue navy hair, not counting my old Granny who overdied the dye. Granny's eyesight wasn't so hot. But mine was.

I stayed around after one of the bored meetings. I found a small notebook under my chair, and I assumed one of the men had dropped his little black book. I sat back down in my chair to see if there was anything suitable for Saturday night. Her voice was quiet but penetrating.

"Give me the book," Arthur, "she said in my ear. I handed it over. For a minute there I thought my mother had come back from the grave. My hands were sweaty, but that's nothing new. I think guys have perpetually sweaty palms until they are at least forty. By then the glands start to dry up.


"I've worked here almost a year now and I don't even know your name. My, Laudnam, isn't it? What's your first name?" I tried to smile and wipe my hands on my pants hoping she wouldn't notice.

"Myla," she said and walked out of the room.

Myla, oh, Myla. Her name made circles in my head. Myla Laudnam. I wondered if she had a middle name but didn't dare to ask. Myla Pearl Laudnam. Myla with the shiny long black hair, deep purplish eyes, and pinkish cheeks. I started thinking about her cheeks. They looked soft, touchable.

I tried to find her but she had left for the day. That night I searched the phone book for her number. No listing. The operator didn't have a listing either.

Myla followed me into sleep. She followed me into the bathroom the next morning and helped me shave. Naked, she held the razor to my slippery chin. White foam puffed to the floor. I dove to work with Myla in the bucket seat next to me. I imagined she'd smile that white-toothed smile I had decided to love.

I turned on my desk-top-computer-and-punched-in-my-code. The phone rang twice and died. Maybe it was Myla? Did she want me and not have the nerve to ask? I'd better make it easy for her. Dressed in my white shirt and my gray slacks. The tie was shiny black. Not flashy. Just a transfer. I wondered then (and now) if she requested that transfer to get away from me. I told her I'd call and write and visit. I even tried to cancel the last night we stayed together. She patted my curls like I imagined that old lady patted her Arthur so long ago. But she left just the same.

Now I work for a company that has a woman president. In fact, there are only three men out of ten execs at the board meetings here. Some guy fills the water glasses and half the secretaries are men. It's hard to get used to. You can't tell which skirts have rank right off, and it's tricky to business with any of them anymore. There's some new law about sexual harassment.

I don't know if that law works for men, but I doubt I'd use it. The other day a pretty little thing from Receiving brought me up a personal package. She had wrinkling I'll-Go-Anywhere-with-you eyes, and a mini skirt that barely covered her bosom. I almost pinched her cheeks, but decided against it.

The package was from Myla. I haven't seen her in ten years now. Milerkill a romance quicker than anything except farting in bed (which I never did). There was no note in the package. I dumped out the tissue wrapping and flattened it carefully, folding each piece. Looking for a note. I knew it was from Myla by the handwriting on the box and the post mark.

I wondered if she had ever married, or had kids, or even lived with anyone. I married three years after Myla left. We have four boys. That's what I get with a Catholic wife. I love those kids, don't get me wrong. I take them camping and all that family stuff. I want them to grow up understanding the wilderness and the big city.

Seven Year Itch. I'm going wild just thinking about remembering Myla. She'd be fortyish. Does she still have pure ravish hair with no gray? Does she still have that firm body she displayed in a chiffon bathrobe? Would I care? Yes, I suppose I would.

Yes, yes, it is a Miami Vice world. Only now I'm just watching it on TV. With a wife and kids I don't get to have any more fun in the sun than mowing the lawn on Saturday, and my oldest kid will be doing that pretty soon. Vice? Let's see. I
still don't consider having a few brews a vice. It's not vice to have sex with your wife. Could I call a fling with a professional that I did two years ago while away on business a vice? I think not. I only did it on a dare, then I worried for six months about turning up with some disease. No, I guess I have no fun and no vices at all.

I set Myla's gift on my desk. It keeps me company. Everyday I get a little low I can look at it, or pick it up and turn it over in my hands. The blown glass is smooth, hard, and shiny. It reminds me of the way Myla felt lying naked in my arms. The glass bubble is tinted ever so slightly blue. Inside is a very tiny man. He hangs naked, suspended by the finest thread of glass I've ever seen. He's a little darker blue glass. Very blue, depressed blue. Middle-aged vein blue. The glass bubble has a small flat spot so it doesn't roll off the desk.

Karla, that's my wife, saw the glass ball the other day. She thought it was morbid; asked me where I picked it up. I told her I'd bought it last time I went to Detroit. I can still hear her saying, "God, it's a lonely man in his own little world, hanging naked by his neck tie... and he's blue! Why would you want a thing like that around?" I laughed it off as no big deal.

I can't stand my tie tight around my neck. I've been thinking of getting a job where I don't have to wear a tie. Sometimes I feel as if I'm choking and find the tie is already loose. The office is full of guys doing girl's work and girls doing guy's work. The computer is always down and the phone system is plugged.

I sat in the living room looking at Karla and the boys. She was doing the monthly bills at the dining room table and the boys were watching the tube. I could look right through the doorway into the dinning room and see my brown haired beauty as though she were framed. Norman Rockwell at his best. We never did get a dog but if we did I think it would be a girl dog named Esther after my mother.

This morning I went to work long enough to clean out my desk and pick up my ice blue orb. I threw the box in the back seat of the station wagon (how can you fit a family of six into a convertible along with fifteen bags of groceries?) and drove to the lower end of town. I went into Snookie's, which is now Bertie's, and into a stench that makes you resist buying any of them. Bags of goods were tucked protectively under chairs between the legs. The air was damp and stinking of cologne and powder filled my nostrils. What is it about fragrances that takes you back in time? Beer takes me to the back porch where Pa swilled a few on those hot summer afternoons. But powder takes me to Myla. Karla uses only soap and some cologne when we go out.

I must have sat there for a long time. The afternoon crowd of happy hour pick ups, old vee-dubs. They drive to the lower end of town. I went into Snookie's, which is now Bertie's, and into a stench that makes you resist buying any of them.

I felt Myla's hand on my hair. Slow petting, smooth hands, with sweetly manicured nails of pink; and the fragrance of powder filled my nostrils. What is it about fragrances that takes you back in time? Beer takes me to the back porch where Pa swilled a few on those hot summer afternoons. But powder takes me to Myla. Karla uses only soap and some cologne when we go out.

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Signs of Spring (March 21)

One fraction of a turn beyond the equinox. Bach's birthday.
Eggs balanced yesterday
begin to fall. Now we try to find
Easter—as if this moveable feast,
an ancient chronologic beast,
must be driven into the fold
and rest its bleeding head on
Mary's breast while Rabbis sharpen
their knives, the soldiers loosen
their swords, disciples hide in
the shadows, and the Angels fly
higher, circle, keening, cry,
buzzard black against the sky.

Robert Chute
Poland Spring
teaches biology at Bates

A lazy bug floats up before my windshield
And prints himself on it.
The third dimension squeezed out of him
In two nanoseconds of slow motion in a tiny whirrup!
He's invisible when viewed from the side.
Windshield wipers won't feel him.
He's a perfect blueprint, a printed circuit,
A schematic on file for a TV preacher's Day of Judgment,
A new Holocene fossil, his own monument.

J. C. Fant
Akron, OH
an archaeologist who has
a permanent visa for Maine

The Night I Was Raped

April, November - this I can't remember
I don't know why
I said No, I sobbed
I wanted to scream, but I didn't
I don't know why
he wouldn't stop.
I remember the bones of my pelvis
the bones of his fingers
clipping
holding me down
the bone of his force
tearing the dark red fabric
of my soul.
The night I was raped
the blood dripped slowly
oozed like mercury but it wasn't
hemorrhaged for three days.
I never told anyone, I didn't know the words
penis
vagina
hymen.
the too heavy weight of his body
the frail craft of my hips
and all that blood for three days
until a black, black wound
formed a scar around my heart
but nothing
healed the pain.

Ardeana Hamlin
Winterport
is at work on a second novel

Graphic by MaJo Keilenham
The Raid

Rufus Bates is collapsing, has now passed out; a useless, hulking, red-haired fatty mass; a large, clothed, rapidly breathing mound there on the floor of his home on Red Bog Road in Universe as the Blaine County sheriff’s deputies gaze at each other and incredulously wonder if this simple marijuana raid will turn into some kind of futility or worse yet a suicide.

“Get an ambulance!” Deputy Caleb Dawes finally directs his partner in what seems an eternity but is only about 30 seconds. “I’ll get his old lady into the cruiser.”

Flora Bates, who had told her husband that keeping those plants, growing just during the winter for some friends in Bangor would be easy and make some money, has begun to cry. And not for poor, old Rufus lying there losing breath liked a beached whale, but for herself and, of course, to make the deputies feel sorry for her. It had seemed so simple, she remembers, sobbing a little harder into the sleeve of her dirty sweatshirt, so little trouble for $500. She doesn’t smoke the stuff, neither does Rufus, he doesn’t smoke anything and now look at him, the big slob.

“Will I go to jail?” she sniffs, picking nervously at her over-primed black hair, and looks over at Caleb as he reaches out, pulls her toward him and snaps handcuffs around her wrists.

“Not for me to say, Mrs. Bates,” Caleb replies in a monotone as he guides her over to the cruiser. “You’ll be going down to Belfast for booking just as soon as we take care of your husband.”

“What about him? What’ll happen to him?”

“Can’t say about that either,” Caleb shrugs, and then tries to reassure the short, pear-shaped woman, although he feels certain she really doesn’t care. “He’s breathing okay, Mrs. Bates, we didn’t need to do CPR, his pulse is strong, a mite fast but strong. The medics will be here in...” and he looks over at his partner now sitting beside Flora Bates in the front seat.

“About 10 minutes, Cal, they’re just back from another run, got ‘em all together, be right over.”

“Okay, now you sit tight with her, I’m going to see how Rufus is doing.”

Rufus, who is now fully conscious and was never totally out, just sort of half in shock, shunts his eyes quickly as he sees Caleb approaching. How can it all have gone so wrong, he wonders. How did they find out? He doesn’t want to go to jail. He’s been there before, twice for poaching. The cells are not big enough for him, at least not the county jail, and the food stinks. He feels Caleb take his pulse again and check his mouth and windpipe for any obstruction. That damn Freddie Blake and his stupid ideas. Freddie doesn’t care about jail; he is so blasted skinny he can slip through the bars, just about. And he never eats. Drinks, that’s all, doesn’t smoke any of this stuff either, but he sells it and it keeps him drinking. It was the lamps, all those damn lamps warming the plants, that’s what tipped them off, Rufus concludes as he hears the ambulance pull in. No sirens here. No trouble for him. "No sirens out here. No grab bag for him either." Rufus concludes as he hears the ambulance pull in. No sirens out here. No grab bag for him either.

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It takes not only the three medics but Caleb and his partner to fill all 300 pounds of Rufus into the ambulance. And as the two deputies unbolt their jackets to cool off, even in the chill March day, they watch the ambulance swing onto the road, heading in the direction of Waterville, look at each other simultaneously and laugh. Then Caleb says, "Don’t know which is worse, his size or his stink. Sure would hate to be those guys shut up inside with him for that far."

"Guess he doesn’t clean himself much, huh, Call?"

"Guess he can’t. Imagine moving around dragging that kind of stuff with you."

"Heard he broke the seat in a cruiser last year when Jack Warder picked him up for poaching."

"Yeah, I know, that was the first time. Jack got him again six months later. Wouldn’t let him sit in the car. Called in for a truck to take him in."

"You think he’s responsible for all these plants and stuff, I mean, you know..."

"Yeah, I know, but who can tell, I seen stranger. Come on, let’s get her down to Belfast."

By the next morning, everyone in Universe knows about the drug raid at Rufus. It makes sense to no one except that he is the fall guy, although they aren’t telling about his wife. No one is very surprised about drugs in Universe. Marijuana, hashish, then cocaine, some heroin have been creeping north from Boston for the past 20 years, and Maine is the perfect spot for running the stuff, with its long, crooked coastline full of small inlets and villages, not to mention the interior and its vast tracts of woods, lakes, sparse settlements and small remote airports. The state is made to order for drug dispersal, much in the way it was the perfect conduit for liquor smuggling from Canada during prohibition in the 1920s.

Marijuana, in particular, is nothing real new in Universe. It made its initial appearance during the late 1960s and early 1970s when the back-to-the-landers descended on the state in droves looking for cheap land, an easy life and escape from the Vietnam draft. Marijuana became a local crop grown for personal use only. Some may have sold it for profit, but most of it was consumed at large pot parties highlighted by nude dancing around enormous bonfires. The local people were always invited; some of them were, marveled at it all and wondered how many of these youngsters would survive their first winter. And, indeed, the group dwindled with each winter, until those remaining realized that earning their living from the land was near impossible, eased back into the mainstream and were gradually absorbed into more traditional occupations. But they continued to keep pot plots on the property until the police began picking off these crops with the aid of helicopters that could spot the plants’ specific cylindrical shape from on high. Then suddenly all this hard stuff—coke, heroin—began popping up in town. That’s what puzzles everyone. And that’s why the morning talk at the post office and general store is concerned but relieved. At least it wasn’t the real brutal drugs, but then again, what was Rufus Bates doing with it all? Rufus of all people. That’s what’s so troubling.

"Look," says Floyd Chase, the mechanic at the local garage, to postmaster Wendell Coffin, "Rufus has enough problems. What’s he want to mess with drugs for? He’s got heart problems; he’s got lung problems; some days he can hardly breathe."

"Don’t know," answers Wendell, as he separates out all the first class mail from the rest, "I don’t recall that he’s ever had that much respect for the law, neither him nor his old man."

"Yeah, but that’s just poaching."

"Poaching," sniffs Wendell, "and Rufus looks up at Floyd who he knows has tried his hand at out-of-season hunting once in a while, "the law’s the law. He’s not starving. He gets state money, so does his wife."

"That’s something I never been able to figure."

"What?"

"How they get welfare?"

"Can’t take care of themselves. Who knows? All kinds of ways to get it; it’s easy to fool the state."

"Yeah, but that’s how he got caught."

"What? What do you mean?" asks Wendell, interested in Floyd’s gossip now as he moves up to the postal window with his stack of first class mail and begins sorting it into the postal boxes.

"Well, the electric company monitors his light bill because he’s on welfare, so one month he runs up this $800 bill because of those high intensity lights used to keep them plants warm enough."

"You kidding, I mean $800, Floyd, I mean I know Rufus is not too bright, but I didn’t think he was totally brainless."

"Well, it looks like he is. That’s why they got an informant in there."

"Who was that anyway? And where’d Rufus get the $800?"

"Whoever owned the plants gave it to him, to Flora actually. The informant was some guy from over in Deerfield. He got cosy with Flora, started hanging around the house, playing cards with Rufus, you know how he likes to play cards."

"Yeah, and he’s not too good at it either. Probably took his money and then turns him in at the same time."

"Wife’s not from around here, is she?"

"I don’t recall her, think she grew up somewhere around Bangor. But Rufus, now, I went to school with him, when we were still using that one room school house down on the Bowdoin Hill Road. Christ, Floyd, he was big then. His father worked in the woods all the time till he got hurt. Then they went on one form or another of welfare. Guess it gets in your blood. When I came back from Boston, he was like he is now."

Meanwhile, down the road about two miles, Jason Theriault, the assistant to Dr. Mooney in Deerfield, is grabbing a cup of coffee in the general store and trying, along with Jeff Bownie, the store owner, to figure out the Rufus-Marijuana connection.

"Money, what else?" concludes Jeff as he rings up a Megabucks sale to Jason.

"But there’s not enough money in that to make it worth it, Jeff."

"Depends on where you look at it from. Any extra money is something to Rufus. Got any idea what it takes to feed him? I’m just happy he pays something on his bill every month. Don’t ever expect I’ll ever get all of my money from him."

"Why give him credit then?"

"Now you know better than that, Jason. Half the people I hold here’ll never pay me everything. What would they do if I didn’t? Where would they go? Look, Rufus was in here a couple of weeks ago and bought lunch. Three pizzas, two
Just get out.

"You can't have your peace and quiet, can you?"

"Out of here so I can have some peace and think."

"Rufus!"

Jason laughs, shakes his big, blonde, bearded face and counts, "I got a better one for you, in fact, two better ones. I mean, I agree, food is very precious to him, it's all he thinks about. You make sense, Jeff, gotta be poe for money for food. Anyway, I had to stop by his house one evening to deliver a prescription he'd called up for and I caught him in the middle of dinner. Flora, I guess, had finished; he was at the table alone with a 25-pound turkey full of macaroni and cheese in front of him plus a loaf of bread and a half gallon jug of Pepsi.

"Did he eat it all?"

"Don't know, I left. Then about a month later, he was in the hospital for his heart problem, severe angina, I think. Anyway, Mooney had him on this low-calorie diet, and I guess he had withdrawals -'cause he started making a lot of noise, you know screaming for food. I happened to be looking in on another patient for Mooney down the hall when the head nurse grabbed me and asked for some help. I told her, hell, give him whatever he wants, if you don't, he'll disrupt the whole hospital. She did. And it worked."

"Can you eat yourself to death, Jesus?"

"Oh, sure, one way or the other. And Rufus is on his way. Too bad, he's just about as nice as he can be. I don't expect to see him held long. He'll stay in the hospital as long as he needs and then be free on recognizance. He ain't going nowhere."

Rufus and his wife are arraigned the next day, he in absentia. He remains in the hospital through the following day and is released, as was Flora, on personal recognizance. She and Freddie Blake pick him up in Freddie's long, wide, two-tone, red, 1977 Plymouth station wagon and bring him home to Universe.

That evening when Flora tells Rufus that she's going to run up to the general store for some cigarettes, he sits comfortably sprawled on a couch which basically serves as his easy chair, rests his hands on his immense stomach that actually had subsided somewhat since his hospital stay and resultant weight loss, sighs and shakes his head, "I may be big and ugly, Flora, but I ain't dumb. You're going over to Freddie's. Oh, yeah, you'll get your cigs, but then it'll be Freddie's. It's been Freddie's for about a year, hasn't it? That's how come we had all that crap in the hospital."

Flora stands by the door, jacket and purse clutched in her hand. She breathes deeply and heavily, not saying a word because she has no idea what to say, but even worse, she hasn't a notion of what Rufus might do since she's never really questioned anything he did. Both have been married before, at about 18, and have children by former spouses, children grown now and on their own, none of whom have amounted to much. Flora had needed a place to live and Rufus someone to look after him. Freddie Blake had brought them together, and it was better than nothing. But she'd always had a thing for Freddie, and Rufus just kept eating and eating and growing fatter and fatter. Good sex became nearly impossible, if at all. Then came the sickness. And Rufus is on his way. Too bad, he's just Rufus.

"What about Rufus?"

"Nothing, not a thing, I guess he's excited."

"How come he wasn't at least an accomplice, although mainly out of stupidity?"

"Poor health, I hear, and circumstances, and I think they're going to pull Freddie Blake into it all and some guys from Bangor and Calais."

"Calais?"

"That's what I hear-running it up and down the Airline."

"Guess Rufus will just stick to poaching from now on."

"Yeah, but, you know, I've never figured out how he can go into the woods without hearing anything away."

"I read somewhere that fat people are supposed to be light on their feet."

"That's the trouble with you, Wendell, you read too much and don't think enough."

"That could be, Floyd."

C. Walker Mattsson

Troy

has published widely

Sitting Ducks

The man and the woman, so brutally slain,

Had murdered for years on an island in Maine,

Till a native discovered their bodies, with shock,

As cold as the mackerel that lie on the dock.

They'd often been seen on inflatable boats,

Exploring the waters—examining boats,

But their rafts were now punctured, as well as their lungs,

And something like lobster was found on their tongues,

Which wasn't surprising. They ate it a lot,

Though nobody knew where the lobster was bought.

They had drifted awhile, but had never been missed,

And the holes in their backs were as large as your fist.

When people collected, it captured the eye

Of two in a lobster boat, pondering by,

And one of them glanced as the points of his spear,

The other inspected his smoking gear

And pecked at the decoys he'd hidden from view—

A couple of ducks that the tubes fitted through,

They smiled in a way that was typically "Maine,

With a quiet complacency hard to explain.

It smacked of a vengeance, unifying, perhaps,

For a capacity so small as the robbing of traps,

But those who are sure that the ocean is kind,

And all that's beneath it, should hear in its mind

That, in view of the manner the tragedy struck,

It's wise to be wary of trusting a duck.

There's also a moral. It's stupid to steal

The spoils of the lobsterman's pot, for a meal,

Since there's always a chance, in exchange for such gall,

He'll use you as bait on another day's haul."

Katherine H. Brooks

Portland

is a summer island resident
Mill Street

When Yvette Cloutier noticed André Bédard on Mill Street, she shrank back from the greater to the lesser gloom of the Hirondelle. The ex-priest had already dodged into the factory office like a tarnished beetle, one shoulder higher than the other, his pants muddy from the autumn din. André hadn't seen Yvette outshined in the window. During these weeks of angry turmoil, they hadn't even spoken. Vic Lenoir, who owned the Hirondelle, ambled over to her table and wiped the linoleum before joining Yvette.

"I guess there won't be no strike," he predicted.

"Don't bet on it," Yvette said. "Bet on Paul."

As the factory whistle yelped and the hands emerged, Yvette and Vic watched the gate where Paul Bontemps stood with an armful of ballots. Most of the men and dozens of girls accepted ballots—until Omer Lejeune, Father Michel's protégé, graduated from excited argument to belligerent interference. When Omer swung at Paul, Yvette stood up, rocking the table. Her glass crashed to the floor, yet Paul, dodging the blow, knocked Omer down and went on pasting out ballots. The whistle stopped. The bells of St. Anne's chimed noon. Vic looked skeptical.

"Maybe," he said. "Only how come you stayed away a whole month? Because of Paul—or because of André? Which, Yvette?"

"None of your damn business, Vic."

"Connie still comes," he went on. "Connie Drapeau, your roommate. Every night, almost."

"Sure!" Yvette admitted. "To drink your lousy beer."

"To pick up guys, rather. To earn a little easy money."

"Speaking her new resolution, Yvette cadged a Tarsent from Vic and puffed moodily. A wave of cynicism engulfed her. Her green eyes flickered under the cascades of tittering hair.

"Well, then, we're just alike. Both our dads threw us out of the house the same year. Truths, teen-age tramps..."

"Aw, see, Yvette. I didn't mean no harm."

Viewing the scene at the factory gate, Yvette set her prominent chin on her new resolution. Yvette moved quickly to the wall switch and flooded the room with light.

"I love him, Vic. He's been wonderful to me. Maybe he don't know about the past, or maybe he knows and don't care. André? André hates us. We two never go to church. Never make confession. Won't drop a plugged nickel in the poor box.... So what? Heaven's here if it's anywhere, not up there among the angels."

"And here's your friend," Vic announced.

Trampling out the Hirondelle followed by his admirers, Paul ignored Yvette. He didn't challenge, he supervised the counting of the strike ballots. Next came Omer Lejeune with his hold-outs. While Yvette shivered, the rival camps glowered at each other. Finally, Robert St. Ongë put the question.

"Are we over the top?"

"No," Paul said. "We need one more vote."

Yvette hunkered down in her chair. A year ago, before her baby died, she'd been a spindle in the factory bearing her pretty hands for a few miserable dollars—barely enough to support a kid who lacked a father, who couldn't digest her milk, who cried all night. The beauty parlor was clean. It paid twice what the factory paid. Connie Drapeau had gotten her in, taught her to wash and set and give manicures. Yvette was grateful to Connie. She wouldn't gossip about Connie's doings.

"One-more-vote" Paul's crowd began to chant, pounding on the tables. Vic appeared frightened, Omer nervous. When the chanting ended, a little Irishman from Omer's side wavered and defected. Paul welcomed him with a bear hug.

"The sun's out again," he said. "And you promised me a walk. Your day off, isn't it?"

"I—yes—but my shoes aren't right for walking."

"So?" he challenged, examining her spike heels. "You can change."

"I can change if you can wait."

"Wait here?"

"Here," she insisted.

She was ashamed of the flat she shared with Connie of Connie's bed littered with gaudy trophies of the exotic song that prevailed the rooms. Thanks to the sisters of the convent, she was ashamed of her body too, but this afternoon would be different. Feeling younger, she replaced the cheap silk dress with a tattersall mini-skirt and a cardigan. The tights gave way to comfortable green knee-socks, the tall heels to russet loafers. As she raced along Maine and into Mill Street, she was conscious of appreciative male glances. When she entered the bar, Vic whistled but Paul seemed annoyed. Yvette paused at the door. Her cheeks went very pale beneath the rakish tan.

"I changed," she said.

"Just the trapping," Paul observed.

They quit the paved streets and climbed a rutted track to Burton's Woods. Trampling through the leaves, they reached a wavy knoll that overlooked town and river. From here they could make out the twin towers of the church and the factory. The breeze chilled her exposed thighs; Yvette hugged herself in the supple leather jacket she'd bought recently.

"Paul... What's the matter?"

Now she spoke in rapid, clicking Quebec French—her parents' language. The hollows in her cheeks were more noticeable. Her eyes became softer. She doffed the top, toasted her head, poured.

"You get the votes, Paul. You'll cut a smile, then, I hope."

When he didn't answer, a single tear rolled toward her uncertain chin. She sniffled, flicked with the top. Why was Paul so cruelly withdrawn? He was worse than the sisters at the convent: stern, punctilious, disapproving. She nudged his arm.

"Look at me, honey. Please look at me."

When he moved abruptly, she retreated in fear. His mouth was a grim trench; his eyes were agates.

"If you visit that fake priest once more, we're through. Understand? He'd crucify me. He's got the foreman and half the workers in his pocket. He's the voice of Father Michel. When André talks, the whole town listens. And you, you can't have it both ways."

"Both ways?" Yvette couldn't even picture the last occasion. "Well, I visited him when Mom took sick, to arrange things... because we were baited. The parish gave her a funeral. Sure, I couldn't go direct to Father Michel. Could I?"

Paul was not convinced. Fine lines webbed his face, though he was hardly thirty, four years older than she.

"They tell me you meet two here, when I'm on the night shift."

"None! Vic wouldn't poison his beer. Vic can't abide André."

"And you?" Paul demanded.

She gazed up so steadfastly that he relented. Their lips touched. A moment later they were clinging together on a blanket of moss, sheltered from the wind. But Paul had also taken her vows. He did not tug at her clothes, as previously. Their kissing was enough, and when he lifted himself from the ground, he was smiling.

"See them twine below? That's what I mean by having to choose. The church or the mill, the past or the future. O.K.?"

"O.K."

"Yvette said. "The future."

Scurrying home, they held hands. She danced nimbly along the bridge, her pants gleaming white above the fetching socks. By the alley leading to her flat, however, Yvette dropped Paul's arm. Further she couldn't trust herself. Besides, Connie might be in. Connie and Paul aren't meet—not till the affair was settled, at least.

"A bientôt, Paul. Jusqu'à demain."

"Demain," he replied.

"Et ça grinder? The strike?"

"We'll know tomorrow, Yvette."

The rank odor tippet her off. In front the hall, the cramped livingness André Bédard dominated: only an excellent cigar. His muddy shoes on her wool carpet drove the wedge of apprehension deeper. The lamp was weak. She could hear only the thick wheezing that came from the full lips in his purple, congested face.

"Don't jump. Your latitudes allowed me in."

"Father!"


The parcel clutched to his belly was wrapped in greasy brown paper. Recognizing the parcel, Yvette moved quickly to the wall switch and flooded the room with light from the ceiling.

"Where's Connie? Didn't she—"

"I bribed her, child. Sent her out for the evening. First, we'll have dinner. I'm famished, as usual. Steaks, wine, dessert. Everything de luxe..."

When she hesitated, André bolted the door and leaned against the frame,
ogling her. The pale eyes without lashes revolved above distended cheeks. His bald dome shone. An expression of fixed greed wreathed his mouth. He was wearing his priest's collar.

"Don't worry, my dear. I don't ask much—a bite and an hour's chat. A friendly communion, you could say."

Yvette huddled on the couch, covering her knees. It was nearly dark; in an hour, if she was lucky, André would go—as all the others had gone—into a dimness best forgotten. Next to her on its face lay the Kewpie doll Connie had won at the shooting gallery. The doll too was limp, cold, numbed. An hour... When she'd mixed the salad, the meat was almost done. Kicking off her loafers and turning up the wide cuffs of her socks, Yvette crept from the kitchenette. In saying grace, André crossed himself.

"...for what we are about to receive, amen."

His steak was rare; the wine reddened his lips more. He wiped them daintily, hiccuped, blinked. His opening words were fairly apologetic.

"And now, our masquerade. It's only a joke. A matter of habit, eh?"

The pun tickled him vastly. His paunch and jowls quivered; Yvette wasn't amused. Perched on the bench opposite, she made up her mind.

"Sorry. No fun and games tonight."

But my dear, nothing ever happens. Remember?"

"Sorry. Not after today."

"Your day off?" he asked blandly. "Your day in the woods with Paul Bonnemps—eh, nymph? The trouble is, he hasn't found out. Yet!"

Already the ex-priest was unwrapping his parcel. True, nothing had ever happened; André had outlived his powers. Acceding suddenly, Yvette took the garments into the bedroom. A matter of habit... The black stockings fitted snugly, as did the starched wimple. A cup of tea, smoked, prepared for bed.

"Can you wait? What's allying you, kid?"

"Nothing, Vic. Nothing that can't be cured."

Defying Yvette's sportive ensemble, the weatherer had turned ugly. Rain dripped into the empty street. The mill whistle blow dolefully.

"I'll come back to me. Won't be back?"

Vic merely shrugged.

Lawrence P. Spingarn
Van Nuys, CA

puted in various Maine towns, graduated Bowdoin, '40

Mill Town

The moving wave is famous with sound.

Men from the town bring in the massive bales
And break them open. Wool is drawn around

The huge, slowly revolving combing wheels
That pull each fiber secrity into line,
Making a blanket uniformly thick.

That moves relentlessly through the machine,
Turning, compacting, shaping into a slick
Soft rope that's spooled and cut. The ready wool
Is taken to the spinning frame; the strands
Are carefully arranged and in the dull

Ham where bobbins whirr, by dozens hands
Of women from the town, at last are led
Through guides, and spun into a strong, thin thread.

Thomas Carper
Cornish

Newman at USM

Skipping stones from a skipping place,
Round and perfect flat and smooth of edge.
Found on Prospect Beach where waves come white to shore.
Where is that in us that knows

A stone times ten, more than three at least,
And knows the weather turned and the shore disordered,
And flings these against the sea.
To watch the flight of water rubbed rock.

We've walked the sand with friends
To search the round and jagged
Bubbles of constant ocean and erosion,
To find the one that fits the palm,

That will catapult from forefinger, index
And thumb. We've piled our rocks next to each
And challenged skinners to make
The flight of stones, counting every

Skip to last the one before.
One swift motion of side arm
Swing, counter swinging for wind,
(Like a sea caught in sudden reach),

And fingers find the flake
For air borne matter heavier
Than sea or sky or flesh,
This becomes the measure of us;

Swept we are upon the backs
Of stones from man to child
To man again, to be lost
Between the folds of each skimming
Place, to sink upon the edge.

Michael Walsh
Brunswick

is a real estate agent
The Piano Player

I knew Gus Martins was something special from the first day he came to work at the Tri-City Mill. He was tall and had thick black hair, and the way he walked across that hall was different—a small lilt in his shoulders and a head high, and he had a nod for everyone, even though he couldn't know anyone. He carried his lunchpail in one hand and under the other arm was a book. A lot of the men read LeJournal, the French newspaper in Troy, on their dinner breaks, but I never saw too many books at the Tri-City.

I was a weaver at that time and Gus was a loom fixer. That first day, one of Odile Archambault's looms got stuck. And in comes Fran Kelley, the second hand in our room, with Gus. My looms were whirring along, so I had time to watch Fran tell Odile that Gus was new, that he had just come over from the Proctor Mill. I'd been in that weaving room three years, I could read lips pretty well.

I watched as he fixed the loom. He seemed very pleasant, talking and smiling at Odile as he worked. I was not jealous. Rejean Lessard had been counting Odile for nearly a year. He was going to have to marry her soon.

"He's a handsome one, isn't he?" I said to Odile, when it was time for dinner. We took our lunchpails and sat in the corner of the room.

"For a Portuguese," she said.

"He's Portuguese!"

"Augustino Martins," Odile said, making the sound like a s. "Look at that hair. He's no Frenchman."

Gus was sitting on the other side of the room, reading his book.

"He's teaching himself to read English," I said. "That's what he's doing."

"He can speak English. Has an accent. I could hardly understand him."

"You have to be able to do better than that to get ahead in this place," I said.

"He's trying to get ahead."

"There's a lot here before him. The French were here, first, Eva."

There were some times when I could not say what I wanted to Odile, and that was one of them. She and I went to the Ste. Famille school together but she left when she was 13 and had been at the Tri-City ever since. I had gone to the convent school and graduated. I could speak English as well as anybody on Prospect Hill, where all the rich Yankees lived and I could read the Troy Chronicle and the Register too. Odile could barely speak enough English to go shopping downtown, even though she loved nice clothes.

I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins. I had never met a man like Gus Martins.
We started walking home as we did the night before, the long way. I told him about Odelie. He listened carefully as I talked. "So I better not walk you home every night or your father will be after me, is that it?"

"Only if you do it for a year."

We had reached the little park on Manchester Street, the one with the statue of Lafayette and the bench. I stopped. "I think I'd better walk on alone from here."

"What's wrong?"

I didn't want to say anything. It was not right to talk about my family, and I knew I was going to hurt Gus's feelings. But I couldn't lie, it was not in my nature. "My parents don't want me seeing a Portuguese."

I turned and ran down Manchester Street, my shoes banging hard against the sidewalk. As I turned into Dublin Street I could hear Gus calling me. The door opened in the house on the corner, and I could see, fast as I was going, old Madame Dubé peering out at me.

Of course I felt sick about the whole thing, like a big dumb cow all the way home. I had embarrassed myself, running off like that. That was the kind of thing Mama would do, and I hated it when she did. I was making Mama and Papa miserable and I had made a fool of myself in front of Gus and worse yet called him a Portuguese which I didn't even know was a dirty word. Mama and Papa would never trust me again, and I wouldn't even have the love of Gus Martins to console me.

But in those days I was still very young, though I felt like I was going through the worst life had offered. And when I got into bed, I fell right to sleep. Even Blanche, coming back from a night at the movies with Rene Champagne, didn't wake me up.

The next day was Sunday. At first I was relieved. I would not have to worry about what to act with Gus at work. The four of us walked down Glasgow Street to Ste. Famille together, Rene meeting us at the corner of London Street. In the past few months I had felt left out. Blanche would sit with Rene and I would usually see Odelie at the other side of the church, with Rejean. I could imagine people looking at me and thinking "She should have been a nun."

In the church I could see Odelie and Rejean, sitting near the front, happy as can be. Father Ganche announced their baptism and Mama looked at me as if to say "There's a girl who does the right thing."

I walked out of church alone, looking for Odelie. They were standing on the remedy lawn, embraces and kissing hands with well wishers. I kissed Odelie and wished her luck. "All well that ends well, eh?" She said to me with a wink. Then she said, "Now we'll have to start working on you."

Mama and Papa were talking and laughing with the Archambaults, so I walked home alone too. I wondered what Gus was doing. The Portuguese were Catholic too, but I supposed Mama would say not as good Catholics as the French. I wondered if he went to the big church on Federal Street. Maybe he was getting out of the 10 o'clock Mass now, just like me. I suddenly knew exactly what I was going to do after dinner - for I did not dare miss Mama's Sunday dinner. I was going to go looking for Gus.

It was not hard to get away. Blanche and Rene left first as always, going probably to Columbus Park, where they could sneak at each other in the beech grove. Gus was soon mooring in the parlour, and Mama waved me out of the kitchen with a dishcloth. She was a little happier, probably because I had arrived home alone the night before.

It was not a cold day, so I walked to the Tri-City and took a trolley from there. The trolley stopped and unwrapped on Sundays, I thought, the only day it was filled with people and happily humming and clacking, alive with work.

This was the Broad Street line, the one I took to Blixirum in the warm months. I knew it well. It went down Quarry Street, where the old granite quarry was a gaping hole in the ground, a swimming hole in the summer, to East Main Street. There was nothing to see - triple decker after triple decker, children playing in the street, shouting at the trolley sometimes, and everywhere the mills - the Proctor, the Chase, the Merwin, the Larrabee. I suppose if you looked at each one closely they looked different, were different. But they all looked the same to me - they were big, they were made of the famous Troy granite, and they had wrought iron gates shut tight on a Sunday afternoon.

As the trolley entered Federal Street, I felt I was in a different world. I imagined it smelled different, a little oilier, of fish rather than meat pie. But then I saw there were all the same stores, a dry goods store like Andre Picard's, except this was run by somebody named Aguir. A bakery, where the bread looked just..."
like the ones Madame Desjardins made on London Street. A shoe shop run by
somebody named A. Ferreira e filhos. I wondered where Gus's club was. In Trois Villes too there were little clubs
upstairs from the stores, clubs for men to meet and drink their homemade liquor.
You had to be French to join those clubs; I wondered if Gus's club had its own
rule.

The trolley stopped halfway down the street. I stood up to get off. I could see
a group of men standing near a little restaurant, talking and laughing. Baltazar
Branco was one of them, and sitting next to him, with his back to me and
holding a mandolin, was Gus. The trolley lurched and I fell into the seat on
the other side of the aisle, startling an old lady. I thought I saw Baltazar point to
the trolley, and Gus turn, but it all happened so fast I don't know now if that's the way
it happened or the way I want to remember it happened.

I got off at Broad Street and took another trolley home. Mama and Papa were
both sleeping in chairs in the living room when I got back. I went upstairs and lay
on the bed in my clothes. I was the first one to hear the doorkbell. Or so I thought.

I went downstairs in my rumpled dress, trying to pat up my hair and thinking
that maybe I should have it cut short like some of the other girls were doing. No
one was in the hall and the doors to the kitchen and parlor were closed.

I opened the front door. It was Gus Martins, holding his cap in his hand.

"Hello, Eva," he said. "Am I disturbing you?"

"No, no, come in." Then I whispered fiercely, "What are you doing here?"

"I've come to meet your parents," he said, in a regular tone of voice. "I thought
it was time."

At that, the door to the parlor opened. Mama came out, still wearing her
apron, a bad sign. Then Papa, in his jacket and tie. I introduced them to Gus in
French, Gus to them in English.

"Pleased to meet you, Monsieur and Madame Blais," he said. Mama muttered
something and disappeared into the kitchen. Papa gestured for us to go into the
front parlor. No one ever sat here except company. The furniture was all made
of this shiny cloth. The fat cushions looked soft and comfortable but were as stiff
as the pews at Ste. Famille. Mama polished the woodwork every week and the
room always smelled like lemons. There were heavy flowered curtains on the
windows in the front and on the side and a big flowered rug on the floor.

Mama came back with a pot of coffee and the remains of a jam cake. Gus said
he thought the house was very lovely and the neighborhood very quiet. He asked
my father what the Tri-City was like in the old days. Papa knew quite a bit of
English, and Mama knew a fair amount, but she kept looking at me to translate,
even when he told her the cake was delicious.

When I wasn't telling Mama in French what Gus was saying in English, I
watched Gus. He didn't seem to notice that my father looked as if he'd rather be
dancing. And then Gus played something. It seemed like he must have.

But after the coffee was gone, Gus seemed to realize he was doing all the
talking. He looked around the room again, and spotted the ugly blue and red vase
in the corner. It was Memere Coulombe's vase, and Mama insisted on displaying it.
Papa hated it. Before Gus could say anything, I said "Gus is a musician."
Everyone looked at me.

"He plays the mandolin and he sings and...", I thought wildly, 'He's very good.
Very musical."

"I love music," Papa said. "It suits my soul."

"It is life," Gus said. "Isn't it?"

"Evacannot carry a tune," Papa said, as if I wasn't there. "But she does like to
dance. Marie Blanche has the ear for music, but not the patience to learn."

At this Mama began to shake her head. Dangerous territory again. Papa had
bought Blanche a piano 10 years ago. It was an expensive piano, bought when he
first became overseer in the spinning room, the first Frenchman to hold the job
ever in the Proctor Mill. Blanche had not played it for at least six years, since she
discovered boys at 13.

I explained this to Gus. "Now it's in the back parlor, gathering dust."

"May I see it?" he asked.

Mama started shaking her head again, then picked up the tray and left the
room. Papa looked surprised, but pushed open the oak sliding doors that
separated the rooms. This was where we lived: the radio in the corner, the big
desk, the sideboard with the everyday dishes piled in stacks, Papa's
piles of Le Journal, arranged by date, in the corner. In this room the heavy
flowered drapes were pulled back, and the last of the afternoon sun poured in.

Gus ran his hand lightly over the keyboard. "May I?"
Autumn Haiku

Pick-Bone
Dusk. Two crows wrangle old cornstalks. Gone are green leaf, silk tassel, ripe ear.

After-Wrath
October leaf-fall bloodies the frostpatch. I walk through the crisp slaughter.

Prism Enigma
Browns. Ominous light fading. Cornfields gray—red smear crossing?

In Session
Once hunters wore blood for their victims. Now, orange.
Is death Hallow’een?

Deer Jack-O’-Lantern
Porch pumpkin grins. Back of barn, a different trophy—night-bleeding skull.

Geometry
I hate squares with equal sized lines and angles. They come in all sizes but measure the same.

I dislike triangles they can’t be trusted. Their names sound just like the illness they are.

I abhor circles they’re too predictable. They always begin at end and always come ‘round.

Lines go on forever in either direction I hate to meet points like that: I never know where they started.

I prefer spirals, small end at the bottom, coming back to similar spaces. They’re dances in motion.

Q Skeleton

the woman on the bridge
is as if remembering something from her childhood or something that happened last night
an exchange between the woman and her husband or her lover
she is as if haunted by something that happened long ago or yesterday something that happened to the woman standing on the bridge in that long dark coat as though she is for the moment at peace watching the ducks in the cool water

Wallace Seavey, Jr.
Winslow
psychiatric social worker & UMA student

Big Pond Poem

The bigger part of my imagination takes things away and returns them as food and drink.

I’m considering why a mountain should be in this bottle, or why when I pull out the cork it doesn’t all bubble over and drown me in the lightest avalanche in recorded history. Things disappear and I don’t know why, nor do I know why they do so sometimes like the angle slice of a knife through flank steak. Or why at other times they trumpet out in painful stages never quite giving in, like that tubular dog of yours you needed you to hold up its tail as it “walked.”

It’s true. I forget the people I remembered to thank for feeding me by candlelight. But I remember this: this is all about commitment, about what happens when you drop something into a big pond and stand silently at the shore with your hands in your pockets as if you had not dropped anything at all.

Michael Brosnan
is Assoc. Editor at Down East Magazine

Kathy Thompson
Waldoboro
is a UMA student

David Walker
Freedom
braches at USM
Thoreau journeyed to Maine wilderness three times, in 1846, 1853, and 1857. On the first trip, he climbed Mt. Katahdin.

North

Chances are you haven’t learned in school about Thoreau, how he passed 3 miles from where you live on his way north to Moosehead, Chesuncook, Katahdin; chances are you couldn’t care less, since at your age life is right there with you, no looking back for it yet, not that far at least; since school sucks, and books mean school, so books suck, especially classics lry—men—with beards—faces like bark—three names—and reputations;

and even if it struck you to read old Henry’s Maine Woods, you’d likely have a hard time finding quiet in the trailer; you’d piece out the pages next door at the homestead, your Uncle Rocky’s old place, with the hairy tongues of hanging plaster, where your brothers board turkeys, pigeons, a calf, TVs, motorbikes, shoot at a nailed-up hoop and lift weights; where the hippies crashed one summer before your birth, as far north as they got.

Peter Miller
Garland
Is an archaeologist

When Thoreau Passed Through My Uncles’ Town: Olamon, Maine, August 3, 1857

I wish that the woodsmoke over the island had been thicker that afternoon or my uncle less hungry when he stepped from his store’s porch toward his brother’s house for dinner for then he would have stopped and looked at the gray cloth hung above the trees, and hearing Moses still clinking at the forge, have struck down through his field to the river.

Warm in his storekeeper’s pants and waistcoat, he would have walked a cowpath through the alders and soon seen close-up how high the water was that summer, moving its dark plane across the field.

When he saw the figures on the island move, my uncle would have faltered, and tried to wave the party in, hoping they would unload their hides before floating down to Old Town.

Instead, the smoke was too thin or, if seen, meant Indians to Charles. He knew without thinking that Penobscots wouldn’t buy supplies, would stretch and cure their hides in order to get full price, and turned to walk up the road to dinner.

On the island the party was tired after ten days of black tea and sugar. The smaller white man, Henry, was asking the Indian the meaning of a native word: Olamon.

Sick the day before, the Indians was quiet, having survived his own cure of gunpowder and tea. The high bell of a smith rang through the river’s noise.

Resigned to houses through the trees, Henry put his notebook back in its sack.

Of the island he wrote, “It is large with an abundance of hemp-nettle.” Like the water, his mood was flat.

Charles Weld
Whitney Point, N.Y.
earned an M.A. at UM

Or I wish that the island trio had not purchased sugar the previous day but, instead, had fed their fire with the drift flung up on shore, set their kettle in the blaze, unfolded pork strips in the long-handled pan, and pushed the smaller white man off toward shore in the birch canoe.

Angling his way on a slight upstream course, he would have corrected against current like a fish, hit the bank near a deadwater tributary, pulled up in the alders, and stepped up the cowpath to the road and store for provisions.

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Clay got his first car that year—a black two-door with a pearl-handled gearshift below the steering wheel. He seemed to be able to suggest the shift into action rather than to push or press; the gears never groaned, and the car, Black Beauty, purred as he pampered it on our drives through the ribboning gold-lined streets of town and north on the straightaway Highway 1. All of us watched the live needle as it tilted past the fatherly mark of fifty down toward the dangerous zone of our desire—sixty, sixty-five, seventy! We giggled and yelled and whistled through our teeth, and Clay, with only the slightest of smiles, held his eyes straight ahead, a cigarette dangling expertly out of his mouth and one arm comfortably cocked out the window. He was as cool as a quarterback, as assertive as any good sea captain holding the wheel of his ship. Clay came to life at the touch of his wheel the way that Mack did holding a football—long fingers feeling the skin in the delicate manner of a man reading braille, then finding the laces and setting it in his grip for a pass, conclusive and right as a final struck chord.

Our year began those days in the hot blaze of fall, the sun still bearing down too hard and moving back from summer’s rule reluctantly, wanting still to be king and hating to watch his greets work burn away into yellow and red and finally to smoke. Footballs exploded off practiced toes, aching bones scrambled out of Clay’s car and cider ran from wooden vats like the rich brown blood of the earth and red and finally to smoke. Footballs exploded off practiced toes, aching bones scrambled out of Clay’s car and cider ran from wooden vats like the rich brown blood of the earth.

That was the year we were juniors, sullen and ripe sixteen and ready to burst. We carried in the wallets that patted our thighs the feeling the hall so hard that the world very slightly but surely tilted and let in an amber, apple glow.

I learned that her name was Katie Dorset and she lived north of town on Willow Road; if Clay hadn’t been with me I never could have made it alone up the hill where her house, gold-eyed and solemn, stood in the midst of those towering oaks. Her father’s great vest was sealed with a chain, and I trembled at his handshake and tried to smile. Her mother, all grace and gleaming eyes, told me to take a seat; but before I said, “Thanks” we turned to a sound on the long steep stairs and saw her—Katie. She came dancing down so fast that her mother burst out: “Slow!” Katie blushed, and her fine round face was the color of an apple. All that fall we spent sitting on hillsides, looking into valleys that were filled with lakes of light, lying so close against the sweet-smelling ground that grass was an individual matter, and fields narrowed down to particular blades. The touch of shoulders made everything stop, and each of us had to concentrate, staring down at one blade of grass until it finally went awash in the blur of our gaze. Sometimes a hand would seek a hand and the two would be suddenly tangled and locked, as intricate and tight as if two giant oaks had bowed their winter heads together and let the million stripped limbs interlock to withstand any wind. Some nights we held tight in the back seat of Clay’s humming car, our faces lighted by the cider glow that poured from the dashboard and the radio and the pale golden apple of the watching moon. At last we would stand a few hushed moments—how long, you can’t measure on clocks—at the front door of her house, under the porch light, pressing our mouths together, and the only thing that broke us apart was a wonderful fear—or else the hooting of the owls in the oaks, or her brothers in the upstairs windows.

Clay ran and apples fell and soon the curbs of the sidewalks smoked as the season burned away. In Clay’s car, with Bruce and Jerry and Joe and the boys, I sometimes sped past ordered fields so fast that they melted together. We cheered because we thought we had outrun everything—the day and the season and the year and all years—and we would never be caught by them, never pushed anywhere beyond this sixteenth sweet-and-sour apple autumn, cursing and kissing as if we had invented them both. Don’t ask me how or why it happened that one sunny Saturday November afternoon I lay on the carpet in Katie’s long living room and had to insist on looking ahead, not to the next day or week or year, but just Ahead, that long shadow, I had to trouble Katie’s clear eyes with the anxious question: “Will you love me then?”

* And she didn’t ask. “When?” knowing it was unnameable, but only said softly, “How can we know?” Not knowing when to stop, I said, “Well, will you remember this moment, then?” She raised up off her elbows and crossed her legs underneath her and hunched down toward them, and even though the great windows were letting in a warm flood of light, her shoulders shivered and a diamond dropped from each of her eyes.

That night the first snow fell, and every last brown apple died. Cider stiffened in the vats, the smoke of leaves curled into frosty breadth, and the hard joints of the season cracked till its great apple heart could pound no more—except in my mind, where it beats back this song a million years later, and laughs for love.
Granny

They say that on Candlemas the winter is half over. There's been a thaw, and areas of tan, dun, and olive dapple the woods and fields. Ice is melting in the bay.

At night, though, the temperature drops well below freezing. Tucker feeds the fire in the big room, thick logs he took from the woods more than a year ago and sliced up with the chainsaw. Marilla is sewing elbow patches onto an old sweater. The girl, Marilla's daughter, has been with them nearly a month. One day she just arrived. She also is sewing something, but her fingers are clumsy on the material, cautiously poking the needle through. The thread she's working with is too long, even Tucker knows that. Tucker did his own mending for nineteen years, until he shacked up with Marilla. A long thread is bound to snake itself into knots.

He feels restless. He's in the mood to start something, pry their attention away from their busy work. He lights a cigarette, makes a clatter of getting a glass ashtray down from a shelf. The girl, on the couch, stays hunched over her sewing and Marilla meditatively sticks her hand up the sleeve, under the hole. The logs crackle in the wood stove.

"I had this friend, Wally, up to Lubec," he says. "I told me a good story once."

"You and your stories," Marilla says, her eyes on the patch. "What's the matter with my stories?"

"You never tell true ones."

"This one is true. Honest to God."

The girl, Hannah, glances at him, holding the needle out at the end of a long thread. Her turtleneck is taut across her breasts. They're small, puny, not like her mother's.

"Wally was just a kid when this happened. I mean little, five or six. His family went on a camping trip." To Hannah he says, "You ever been camping?"

The girl looks at her mother. "I don't like bugs," she says carefully.

"They went to Baxter State Park. The whole family: Wally, his little brother Phil, his sister, Mother, Daddy, old Granny, dog, cat."

"Must have been a tight squeeze," Marilla says, putting a knot in her thread. "They have a bus?"

"Station wagon. Camping gear in the back, big old canoe lashed to the roof. Cat in a cage on the floor. Dog jumping back and forth between the front seat and the rear seat. Everybody singing, except the cat, which is yowling."

"A hundred bottles of beer on the wall," Hannah says. "You got it. Finally, after fourteen hours on the road, they make it to the camp site."

"Fourteen hours to Baxter from Lubec?" Marilla says.

"Rough going in those days. Lots of roads weren't even paved, you know. And they got lost a couple times. So they have to pitch their tents in the dark, and it's commencing to rain, and Wally and Phil and the girl are hungry and whining, and the dog is barking and running around in circles, waking up all the wildlife between East Millinocket and Houlton, and the mosquitoes are biting, and the old granny is wishing she'd never been born."

Hannah says, "That's how I always thought a camping trip would be." Her voice is low-pitched, it still surprises him sometimes.

"Wait a minute," Tucker says. "So the next day the old granny gets her wish. She dies. Without any warning, just up and keels over."

"Stroke?" Marilla asks. "Heart attack?"

"Who knows? You think they've got an M.D. on the premises? Wally's daddy is madder'n hell, he didn't want the old lady along in the first place. But his wife got her own way, as usual. Now look at the mess they're in. A corpse on their hands, and Wally's daddy has to be back to work in the cannery Monday morning. If they start notifying authorities and filing death certificates they'll be stuck in the boonies for a month."

"A fate worse than death," Hannah says.
"He'll get fired and they'll all starve. So what they do is, they load the body into the canoe and tie it back onto the top of the station wagon and set out for home. They never even lay eyes on Mount Katahdin."

Hannah, smiling, puts the cloth she's sewing aside. It's the first time Tucker has seen her smile.

"But Wally's daddy," he continues, "can't drive as fast as on their way up. He's worried they're going to hit a pothole and the old lady will take off, flying, out of the canoe. So he takes it real slow and easy, and after fourteen hours they're still a long way from home. Everybody's bushed, including the dog. The cat had a nervous breakdown hours ago.

"Round about Baileyville they spot a motel, one of them Mom and Pop operations with the crummy little cabins, by the side of the road. It's got a coffee shop, it's even got TV."

"We wanna stay in the motel!" Hannah yells.

"You bet. Have a good time, too. Eat burgers and fries in the coffee shop, watch a Debbie Reynolds movie on the TV."

Marilla asks, "What about the granny in the canoe?"

Tucker takes the next part in his own time. "Next day they're all up bright and early to make the rest of the trip home. There they stand, blinking in the sunlight outside their cabin. They're just staring into space, because there isn't anything else to see. No station wagon, no canoe, no Granny."

"Oh, God," Hannah says.

"Wally's old man races over to a drop-off at the far side of the parking area—there's a landfill there they didn't notice the night before. Maybe he forgot to set the handbrake and the car rolled off the edge. He looks down on a heap of baked bean cans and bottles and busted baby buggies. No station wagon."

Hannah begins to laugh.

"Now Wally's daddy knows he's had it. An hour later he's explaining to the Baileyville constable that his car's been stolen and oh, by the way, there's a dead body in a canoe on the roof."

"Are you sure this is a true story?"

"Listen, that's not all. The funny part is, the state police never found a trace of the missing car. They had to have a closed casket funeral because there wasn't any body. Granny was just gone, vanished into thin air."

"So what is the point of the story?" Marilla asks.

"Point?" Tucker says, annoyed. "Since when does a true story have to have a point?"

Elaine Ford
Millbridge
excerpt from Monkey Bay, to be published 8/89, Viking Penguin
The White Buffalo/ kathleen lignell

Kathleen Lignell’s prose allegory is clearly the most ambitious and challenging undertaking in fiction to emerge from our literary timber this year. It is not a sequel to The Calamity Jane Poems (this would imply a progression in linear thought), but rather an extension, an expansion on, CJ’s themes and imagery. The intent is similar: to charge full tilt into the herd of cluttering cowboy cliches that mill around in the West of our minds. CJ drew a bead on some of the dualities in our dream of the frontier: male/female, good hais/had hais, winning/losing & loving. The White Buffalo is not a gun battle but a migration, a quest journey, with overtones of Don Quixote and the paladins of the Grail. At last sight we left Calamity Jane.

“Bedecked by her steps upon the land, how far she must travel... she is still coming and going.”

Now as we enter, the curtain opens again to reveal the great plain of the buffalo, quiet, covered with “a blanket over the plains, woolly, thick and brown... An American scene, certainly.” The stage is set: this new fiction is at once a play, an allegry, a mock-epic, an inscription, an exhortation to invent a new myth for the Western half of our minds.

Themes and images in CJ run parallel to the tracks of WB. There are differences beyond the obvious one of form. Female figures, central to the former are absent from the latter, except for the white hull’s fleeting memory of a cow he had loved, a mention of the Plains Indian woman’s role in using the buffalo, and the presence of a few white women on the train that meets the final stampede.

This is not a poem about Mother Earth; the metaphor for the West, for the process of change, are made irrespective as they are limited at all by any one construct such as sex. The horizon of the allegory becomes wide as all outdoors. If you are picking out mythic material for an era as complex as ours, with problems of survival as acute as ours, pick fabric with a lot of give. One buffalo hide the air!

When Jane traversed the West, she was the main actor on her stage, rarely pausing to “... [see the Future in the Past]: “Pines drip sap, a handful of buffalo still feed on toward the setting sun. Jane steps outside, looking in at original man, a man with memories and dreams and all things perishing.” She already had “Buffalos in the Backyard”: “She moves on pass buffaloes in the backyard, their red eyes raging as if these great humps could be eruned from history.”

But they cannot. For now, in this new book, their tracks tell us how nature confronts history. Lignell has carried over language and imagery from Jane’s arsenal; she lays out a drama of epic scale, beyond heroes and hercules. No reader can identify with the buffalo. Unlike the protagonists of Grendel, Animal Farm, and Huckleberry Finn, which Lignell suggests as comparable allegories, this buffalo is truly superhuman, in fact superhuman. Considering the variety of human voices woven into the storytelling, the reader could be excused for thinking that some superhero’s voice will soon emerge, that the buffalo will turn out to be a Christ figure, and we’ll have The Narnia Tales for eco-freaks.

Thank literary goodness, no. The buffalo herd is “a humon history,” a vanishing point, not a totem. Our buffalo watches humanity literally dismantling his species, ripping up carcasses, piling up bones; we are reminded that while it is all true, it is also a metaphor for human’s hunger for possession, for control of the natural world which yetcontrols us. We don’t get to assume the white buffalo’s robe. We’re in the play, cast as humans like Buffalo Bill and Kit Carson.

The variation of voices make reading WB an exercise in awareness. The voices are an integral part of the formal, tripartite structure of this work. Poetic form belongs to CJ, a photo album that ends with Jane’s death. Poetic voice belongs to The White Buffalo. But it is one of at least five voices or styles interwoven in the text, melodic lines in a symphony, scored for different instruments. The effect is to keep the reader from settling comfortably into that warm bath of predictable imagery that makes up a mystique. The reader encounters on the first page the incantatory, bardic style, reminiscent of Indian legend; the voices of the buffalo and the Indian are completely interwoven in the first three paragraphs. Immediately afterward, the style shifts to objective, natural-historical reporting, and then to a chatty, colloquial mode flavored with New Age observations:

“Buffaloes may seem inhuman, but they are not really. In fact they would never choose to live all alone by themselves somewhere. They are typical Tarzans: Earth, fixed; Rules, Verme. The herd appears more human than humans. Buffalo raise children, worry, discuss: ‘Someone remarked that the grass seemed greener. After a while someone else said he felt full even though he hadn’t eaten for hours.’

The herd is ‘they,’ not ‘it’; they are compared to ‘newborn children... starchy for life.’ Yet they are not: ‘it was almost too much for a cud-chewing animal to comprehend,’ says a matter-of-fact narrative voice. And ‘as a rule, hooved animals have poor eyesight, with little focusing power.’

These frequent changes of tone, voice and perspective are challenging. The buffalo is borne, magical, frightened, philosophical and credulous. Sometimes the language harks a haunting familiarity: the white buffalo “had a sturdy heart, old friends somewhere, and a home on the range.” Cowboy cliches, from old Westerns, engraved in our minds. ‘My father and grandfather died on this range,” he says, addressing the herd. “And it was home again for all of us when we found each stream, each lake, each new grazing spot. When I found the quail with rosebushes on it lying across my bed, I knew I was still in the same place.”

The Rosebud image is a holdover from CJ (published by Rosebud Press), and recurs. It is a good instance of what poets are up against in trying to reclaim images to fit new myths. Whenever I read ‘Rosebud,” I see Caimen Kane. It’s not an inappropriate connection, but it reminds us that we have a great deal of cultural baggage loaded into our train going West. As the white buffalo and Sitting Bull found, “it was difficult to speak without cliches.”

In the section entitled “On The Range,” there is a realistic diary account of buffalo-skinning pioneers. Then the buffalo hums “Home On The Range.”

“Several paragraphs on, Buffalo Bill intones: ‘I am just a butcher, delivering the daily meat.... Each day, for the butcher who begins to build a world, the West begins.’” This section is then repeated word-for-word. Lignell later assures us, in “legends the language always says things twice for emphasis.” In my legends there’s a threefold pattern, but hey, we’re inventing the West here. We have fairy-tale poachers, Indian legends on how the buffalo got his hump, and Buffalo Bill chasing rainbows, while insisting, “What’s so sacred cow ‘bout a bunch of dumb buffalo anyways?”

Lignell has scored so rich a mix of tones here that it is easy to become confused. Allegories traditionally have the moral fairly clearly drawn; in fables it is explicit. By the time the crisis of WB is reached, and the herd stampedes to meet the Union Pacific head on, the reader may well have suspended the usual categories of judgment. Buffalo Bill, peering for his first dream of the rainbow, remembers, “Each object isolated, dragged from its boundaries, relocated. And this temnor in the heart which no longer made sense.” At the end of his life, still troubled, he finally releases the white buffalo from his Wild West show. “It was against himself surely, his own being, that Cody had been struggling all these years. He was already weights by what he had torn away from the living frontier.”

It is we who must resolve this living sacrifice of the natural world to our expansive imaginations. The white buffalo’s mission is to point the way.

Although limited, his impact was still in the making. One day, he was wishing, his life would be real as that iron horse streaking across the continent. It was curious, yet sure; it was not for himself that he wished this, but for the others.”

Lignell’s ambition here is to wrestle our present myths to the ground. She hopes that the form in which they next spring up will allow us to live in more harmony with the earth. In the project of myth-making she has joined a company of 20th c. writers, headed by James Joyce in Ulysses. Before a disheartened reader rises to object, “Kathleen, you’re no James Joyce,” it is only fair to point out that her aims and perspective are quite different. In its way, however, WB seeks to reclaim the world in a new image, as Ulysses did. The white buffalo even gives his own epitaph: he “had come to resemble heaven and earth and his wisdom embraced all things. Although he had suffered—they had made him suffer—he rejoiced in his knowledge of fate and was therefore free.”

The book covers great territory in 106 1/2 pages. Will we be willing to cover this territory over our own time-harmonized trails? Can we identify and protect the herd within us? Or will we keep riding that Union Pacific train to the end of the line, ‘til we meet that last stampede? Readers, hit the trail.

Catherine S. Baker
Sproce Head
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Sailing

Randall Jarrell once defined a novel as “a long prose narrative that has something wrong with it.” If that’s true, then Susan Kenney has written an extraordinary novel. When she is at her best, as she is through the greater part of Sailing, she is a writer of astonishing power and penetrating vision, so that one is left wondering, “How could anyone put all this together as she does?”

Sailing emerges from one of the later episodes of Kenney’s earlier book, Another Country, but it is not a sequel exactly. The point-of-view is altered and Sara and Phil Boyd move their marriage center stage, along with his deadly and elusive cancer and the sailing that becomes his obsessive release from its specter, and Sara’s exhausting and tenacious struggle to keep life in place and hopeful.

The novel opens at a coastal boatyard in high autumn, with the writer’s eye on Phil:

As he staves now across the bay at the surrounding hills and islands, the landscape tomes on thus flatness, that brittle hazy clarity of detail. He blinks. The diaphanous dissolves. The truth is the foliage is already past its peak. The scarlet maples are more remembrance, the colors faded, so that far away the land on the horizon lies curled around the water like a rusty chain.

And back quickly to a mirror scene at home:

The mirror is old and makes him look more blue and fragile than he really is. He has lost no weight to speak of, only five pounds or so, is still strong, but there is a faltering to his complexion, as though someone had powdered his face with chalk and blown air but a more residue away. He feels this paleness as a thin layer of ice water just beneath his skin.

And Sara moves into this world like weather. The narrative leaps around in time, joining the dots of Phil and Sara’s emotional and physical history. And yet, there is nothing cloying or phony about this love; it’s achingly real and as compelling as the rest of any life.

By the time one has reached the end of this novel, it is no longer possible to imagine a world that doesn’t hold Phil and Sara—the small domestic catastrophes or hilarities set against the grim plots of chemotherapy, surgery, the maddening postures of physicians—in scenes gaining sad currency for too many.

Sailing has its flaws, though with each reading they seem more and more negligible. The time shifts seem overdone, annoyingly so when one has to keep backing up to stay placed. Part of this is poor layout in which segments are not clearly spaced. Generally, there are more writer’s devices than Susan Kenney’s considerable talent requires. And Phil’s character has, at rare times, an irritating opacity—as if he isn’t really Phil; for example, his sexual musings on Sara that seem inexplicably juvenile.

But Sara! Sara is a pure diamond of character, at once powerfully complex and elusive, yet libidous and clear. Sara with the will of a pit bull, the acouge of doctor. Sara the artist reborn. Sara capturing a bat in a chimney, adjusting to tragedy the gravities of domestic life. Sara fighting the sail she thought would join them. Men should read this book at the risk of facing the paltriness of their own love.

For Phil and Sara, mortality is their daily bread and, finally, their love feast. Whether under bright sail or the fragile shelter of home, they stay in the reader’s senses long after the book is done.

In her Author’s Note, Susan Kenney gives thanks for “one of the most painless editing sessions a writer ever enjoyed.” Had it been a shade more painful, Sailing might have been one of those books that stands astride an age. As it is, Susan Kenney has produced a riveting and poetic tale of contemporary life, as relentless as its Sara. Read this book.

David Adams
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is a poet & teacher

Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett/

edited by Waugh, Greenberg, and Donovan.

Lance Tuttle, publisher, 1988

What’s special about the new Sara Orne Jewett story collection? For one thing, this collection actually may live up to its title of Best. This particular collection has a remarkable variety of subject matter, settings, and characters. Some stories, such as “Miss Sydney’s Flowers,” “Miss Temple’s Watchers,” and “A Bit of Shore Life” could be categorized as character descriptions using a reminiscence framework, yet even they are unusual for their contrasting city, shore, and farm settings.

As for subject variety, this collection is remarkable for the “unmentionable” topics delicately presented. In “Autumn Holiday,” the reader is treated to a nineteenth century look at a transvestite or dual personality—possibly a precursor to the infamous Three Faces of Eve a century later. Is it possible that nineteenth century males would tolerate the idea of a “house husband”? Jewett tested that idea in “Tom’s Husband;” in which the male stay-at-home displays some typical bored housewife’s complaints. Cohabitation before marriage? Read “The Counting of Sister Wisby” to share a small Maine town’s uncannily tolerant reaction.

From the humor of a poor farm’s elderly female inhabitant who gives in to wanderlust in “The Flight of Betsy Lane” to the dire effect of sin, retribution, and a curse in “Dark New England Days,” this collection, which also includes the classic “A White Heron,” is a must have, must read—not only for Sarah Orne Jewett fans but for anyone interested in New England literature.

Overall, the collection is delightful, affordable, and definitely appropriate for a college level New England Studies reading list or a Junior-Senior High unit on Maine literature.

Estelle Watson Sanders
Windham
Beaches at Windham H.S.
Marguerite Yourcenar—Femme du Siecle

The "Immortelle" is dead, although a lengthy stay in Maine certainly preserved her well. Sole woman elected to the Academie Francaise (1981), Marguerite Yourcenar was a calm sort of Joan of Arc—reserved, very much the philosophe. Her nomination to the sacred club of the "Forty Immortals" stands as a step forward for all French women writers. Considered a master of the psychological analysis of history, Yourcenar distinguished herself by her capacity to remain detached from the emotion of a situation. Her evocations of the past illuminate the present. Follows an recapitulation of her life and detailing of her oeuvre.

Only child of Michel de Crayencour and Femand de Marchienne, she was born in Brussels in 1903. A month after her birth, her mother, a Walloon, died. Educated by tutors and her father, she learned several languages. Her father, from an old family of French Flanders, was known for his romantic intrigues. He was inspiring. Her first three novels, as well as the first tome of her autobiography, involve family history. Her major works’ subtlety recall the intricate tapestries of her patrie.

Yourcenar was reading Racine and the classics by age eight. At ten, she acquired Latin, at twelve Greek. During WW1, she traveled in England. Upon publication of two small collections of verse in the 20s, she took the rom de plume "Yourcenar," an imperfect anagram of Crayencour. Her father sponsored these "oeuvres de jeunesse"; she was scarcely twenty years of age. At his death, she found herself with a comfortable inheritance. She traveled in Europe and across the Mediterranean. In 1929, she wrote Alexi (novel), and in the course of the 30s she made long stays in Greece and translated several erudite Greek and Latin poets. Her interest ranged even to the Far East, which resulted in Oriental Tales (1938).

In 1937, to conduct research at Yale U., she came to the USA. The outbreak of WW11 persuaded her to stay. "Months stretched into years," she wrote, "as the war didn't end." She would live here in the Northeast for the next half-century. During the decade following her arrival she served as professor of comparative literature and lecturer on the history of art at Sarah Lawrence College. She translated into French The Waves by Virginia Woolf. In 1947, she accepted American nationality, but failed to advise the French authorities in the hope of preserving French citizenship, which she eventually lost.

Another reason for her decision to remain in the U.S. was her amitie with Grace Frick, a high school teacher who became Yourcenar's principal translator. They bought a small house on Mt. Desert Island, appropriately, a former colony founded by Champlain in the early 17th c. The house at Northeast Harbor needed renovation, so plumbing and central heating were installed. "As for my association with Grace Frick," she said in a Paris Review interview, "we met when we were both women of a certain age, and it went through different stages—first passionate friendship, then the usual story—two people living and traveling together for sake of convenience and because they have common literary interests." Then she speculates: "But what is love? This species of ardor, of warmth, that propels one inexorably towards another being? Why give so much importance to the genital-urinary system of people? What matters, as I said, concerns emotions, relationships. But whom you fall in love with depends largely on chance." Publication of Memoirs of Hadrian (1952) furnished Yourcenar with the means of concentrating on the novel. "I am without roots," she once said. "In order to steal from Hadrian, I must be at home in all places and nowhere."
Hadrian was her cheval d'oeuvre. Frick translated it, as well as Coup de Grace, and The Abyss. The two women lived together until the death of Grace Frick in 1979. Cardinal Richelieu founded the Académie Française in 1634 for King Louis XIII. Centuries later, Yourcenar found herself the champion of a cabal. The academician, Jean d'Ormesson, proposed her as candidate for a chair. The earlier loss of French citizenship postponed nomination until she was awarded citizenship, only months before her election. Finally, in 1981, she achieved the rank of immortal, arbiter for life of French language and literature. She was elected, 20–12, despite her declaration that she would not wear the traditional costume of gold braid. She refused the customary gift of a saber but agreed to accept coins from the reign of Hadrian, with his motto: "Libertas, Humanitas, Felicitas." At that point, the first female "Immortal" was 78 years old. In her address, she remarked upon the exclusively male tradition of brotherhood she once described as a "club of elderly gentlemen." It bothered her. "This uncertain, floating me, whose existence I myself dispute, here it is, surrounded, accompanied by an invisible troupe of women who perhaps should have received this honor long before," she reflected, "I am not at ease to let their shadows pass." d'Ormesson, who presented the silver-haired, soft-spoken author as a fellow member of the Academy, said that after Jean-Paul Sartre and Louis Aragon, Yourcenar was the best representative of French literature in the world.

The nomination sparked a furor—not only a woman, but also a citizen of France and the USA at the same time. The truth is, she was the second American admitted to the Academy; Julian Green won election in 1971. Thanks to her new international reputation, she knew a period of success during the 1980s. English translations of at least eight books appeared, starting in 1981. The reedition of major works such as Coup de Grace assured her of a comfortable life in her small French country house in Maine. She lent her support to ecological campaigns, saying today is what humanity will leave for tomorrow.

"Books are not Life, just its ashes." M.Y.

Yourcenar amassed other accolades. She received the Medal of Commander of the Legion of Honor. French and Belgian governments decorated her; the Belgian Academy of the French language, the Dutch Academy, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters awarded her chairs as well; she received honorary diplomas from three New England colleges: Smith, Bowdoin and Colby. She won the Medal of Honor for Literature of the National Art Club. The Erasmus Institute of Arts and Letters bestowed a gift, half to be donated to charity; Yourcenar chose the World Wildlife Organization.

An attack of apoplexy hit in November, 1987. At the end of the month, she gave a final interview to Shusha Guppy of the Paris Review. The outcome is revealing. "I write everywhere," she said. "I could write here, as I am talking to you. When in Maine or elsewhere, when I am traveling, I write wherever I am or whenever I can. Writing doesn't require too much energy—it is a relaxation, a joy." And what about her reading? "I dislike all literary worlds," she said, "because they represent false values. A few great works and a few great books are important. They are aside and apart from any world or 'society.'" A few days later, she returned to Northeast Harbor, where she died December 17, 1987. Jacques Chirac, prime minister and mayor of Paris, honored her: "She offered a strong reflection on morality and power, on the strength of a classical and rigorous style with a personal tone." Cosmopolitan and universal, Yourcenar will be missed. The literary critic, Jacqueline Pailler, called her "an unabashed humanist with old-fashioned ideas." The manuscripts will be kept at Bowdoin. Her house will become a museum, her rich library preserved.

For a career that lasted fifty years, her oeuvre is not overwhelmingly big. But diverse and well-groomed. Best known for her fiction, she also wrote memoirs, essays, poetry and drama. She will be remembered as a classicist and literary stylist. She said she had "one foot in scholarship and the other in magic arts." She translated The Waves by Virginia Woolf and What Must Know by Henry James, both praised for overcoming stylistic difficulties, which one imagines were considerable given the originals. She translated the modern Greek poet, Constantinos Cavafy, Thomas Mann, The Amor Coram by James Baldwin, and Five Modern Noh Plays of Yukio Mishima. Mishima: Vision of the Void is a treatise on the Japanese writer. She also translated into French many Negro spirituals she heard during a trip through the southern United States. In Normand, a quarterly, she explains what she looks for: "The books I like best are those where there is intelligence, goodness, and no injustice. These are very rare indeed. I think the reason there is so much bad literature, or at least one of the reasons, is that the average person who sets out to be a writer goes around looking for subjects to write about, and editors should have the effrontery to ask you, 'Could you not possibly write a novel about—or an essay until...to which I always reply that I never write anything I have not chosen myself.'"

Memories of Hadrian is clearly her masterpiece. Not really an historical novel, but rather a monologue on the life of the Emperor, it is an imagined autobiography in the form of a letter from him to his successor, Marcus Aurelius. She examines history, humanism, and the psychology of power through the eyes of an emperor examining these same questions himself. She revels in the eloquence and splendor required of a "leader who has had the hubris to emulate. a god." Reading the book, one has the impression of discovering a newly-found document. Yourcenar, however, accumulated notes for a quarter century.

Her settings are poignant. The different milieu stretch across western history—second century Hadrian's, a XVIc. Flemish philosopher's in The Abyss, to postwar Lithuania in Coup de Grace. In all those times and places, she delves into governing: what is the effect of power on those who exercise it? This analysis of the interior self makes her like her contemporaries, but she goes farther, outside the self, and asks about the use of power by man on his fellows. This sense of an eternal and eternal humanity is embedded in the heart of her works—from descriptive scenes of her childhood to the suspense of an assassination attempt against Benito Mussolini.

In Fires, prose poems from 1936, diverse classical figures speak monologues. Most are female: Phedre, Antigone, Clytemnestra, Lera, and Sappho. Three male voices: Achilles, Patroclus, and Phedros. In the novels, however, many of the protagonists are male homosexual: Alcibiades, Eric, Hadrian, Zenon, Mishima. Racine may have had a strong influence on Yourcenar in this, for excepting Brittanicus, all of Racine's protagonists are women. In Coup de Grace, for example, Yourcenar has Eric fall in love with the brother of Sophie—who falls madly in love with Eric in turn. Again, as in Phedre of Racine, passionate jealousy is a typical theme of French literature.

The Abyss will serve to guarantee her renown. A Belgian film director adapted the novel, with Gian Maria Volonté in the role of Zenon. I saw it last summer. Gripping. The philosopher hero, a priest in a life devoted to Reason, is persecuted by a Church in the throes of the Inquisition. For the moment, the only other film based on her novels is Coup de Grace, directed by the German Volker Schlondorff (1976). That movie must be good too; the narrator finds himself obliged to kill with his own revolver the woman captive who has been his mistress. Marguerite Yourcenar embraced our century. She knew 84 of its first 87 years. She was a veritable femme du siècle, representative of the strong tradition of classical study upon which Western society is based. Her place in history as an "Immortal" is assured.

Duff Plunkett
Milford
is a poet, singer, student
I Wanted to Tell You/Burton Hatlen.

For those of us who have found Burt Hatlen's poems only in the here and there of literary journals, the publication of I Wanted to Tell You is a blessed event. The title, so close to Williams (Williams and Creeley seem the ghostly godfathers of his style), is a perfect description of the matter and manner of these poems. The book might also have been called A Domestic Symphony. For the musical ear of Hatlen's poetry falls on the close ingredients of life—parents, lovers, wives, children, landscapes walked through, the grey image of a current world—cast in render, jazzy rhythms so precisely musical one can almost hear the bass line behind the words:

Sheldon, I want to
dream with you now,
for awhile, of the
white-muscled antelope
as they walk, twenty
in a file, through
the grass, browsing
under the July sun,
it shivers a little
—from "Crossing Alament"

These poems are vulnerably human, filled with people just as witches' houses have familiarities. People eating, making love, reading, aging, remembering a day's list of things to do.

For good or ill—very much more for good—everything here is tethered to the poet, and we walk the images back into the poet's heart, as in "Night Moline. Rain": a wonderful poem. I have other favorites—"The Leaf House," "A Phone Call From My Mother," "In a Strange Time," "March," "The War Comes Home," and two chillingly fine long poems that capture what it means to come to Maine from away and live here, "Maine: an Ode" and "A Walk in the Woods."

Over and over again, in wonder or pain or delight, Hatlen answers Karl Shapiro's question, "What is the poetry of that?" I Wanted to Tell You is a solid book, the trace of one person's poetic life, and thanks to the National Poetry Foundation for bringing it to us.

David Adams
Edinboro, PA
in a poet & teacher

The Hebrew Lion/Kenneth Rosen

This year's winner of the Maine Arts and Humanities chapbook competition once again promotes and celebrates the high quality of creative writing prominent in this state. Ken Rosen's The Hebrew Lion is an intensely powerful collection of fifteen diverse poems, all exemplifying the talent and versatility of this writer.

Rosen is not an easy poet. He always demands as much of his reader as he apparently expects of himself. And this collection is no exception. Linking historic and literary images with contemporary issues, Rosen creates tension and immediacy in a stream-of-consciousness style characteristic of his previous work.

The opening poem "Monkey Zero," for instance, traces the deadly AIDS virus from an African jungle. Rosen concludes that "this is memory without history, and that make-wave of death and hysteria our flooded planet's whole sign." The confrontation with our collective past makes us uncomfortable; the truth is painful. Yet, we seem destined to repeat the cycles.

Others, like "Caribou," "Stormy Night," "Crying Like a Child," and "White Dove," feature a prominent narrative style that engages the reader in the speaker's process of discovery. In the tradition of poet as storyteller, Rosen keeps intellect and emotion in balance, and resists the easy temptation to sound self-righteous or arrogant. Instead, each narrative is tightly constructed, carefully developed, and sharply focused.

One of the most poignant selections is the reminiscence "Forgetting Ogunquit" in remembrance of a friend dead five years. Without being gratuitously nostalgic, Rosen recaptures twenty years of experiences shared between two families, putting the intersections of their lives into some kind of manageable recollection—only to let it go.

Forget it. For just as tossing itself with spray the sea forgets our every path and act, or a girl's portrait in a summer cottage forgets us totally, these misremembering glances are soon eclipsed. Luck in life, is a kind of carelessness, pointless as beauty, better than regret. Yet there was strangeness here, a light and life which taught my spirit and my eye, to which I said hello, and kindness, to which I'll say goodbye, and will forget.

The collector's title piece, "The Hebrew Lion," is a showcase for Rosen's ability to draw on powerful allusions and historical references. Like several others in the collection, "The Hebrew Lion" has a primitive setting—the African grasslands—which serves as backdrop for his detailed allegory. The poem is interspersed with Hebrew responses that thematically connect the interaction among a hungry old lion, an unsuspecting zebra, and a watchful gorilla. This is a powerful piece—and readers undoubtedly will react strongly to it.

Rosen's reputation as an eminent Maine poet is not new. But this collection confirms his place among contemporary Maine poets. Readers can look forward to this chapbook scheduled for publication in the spring.

Carol A. Kontos
Windham
teacher at UMO
David Gordon's modest subject is merely 500 years of local history, inland explorations, sea trade, Indian conflicts, tiny settlements up Maine's coastal rivers, and the Revolutionary War. The book is philosophical, in the sense of the Greek pundit who said that "history is philosophy learned from examples." rifle, rich with examples, Outward shows us what we are by showing us what we were. In a striking image that recurs, a boy named Linnie has a vision of history's flickering happenings as he is lowered by a rope down a well shaft; he "heard drone, far off voices, rasping flint throats,/ stringy old men, tough, bull-necked men, boys, scared whispers, screams, women, from close at hand as out of the stones/ along the well wall." Gordon uses this archetypal descent to the specific to set up his cornucopian outpouring; he returns to Linnie deep in the well near the end to suggest the rebirth that is possible, the ascent, the transformation that awaits us in the future— in short, his title. "And Linnie sank through/ human, clay ooze/ till he/ slipped limpid cold well-spring/ ... then felt rope wrench him/ up into sun-quick light/ and Carla/ of Linnie's kin/ saw Osiris rise from the dead/ upgoing/ from his sires...." The image is arresting. Wisely, the 18th c. philosopher of history, wrote that "Man understands only what he makes, thus the center of man's reality must be history. This he has made." Gordon, of Sheepscot, has made an unusual, thoroughly original book here. It is not a collection of poems, as was Robert Cree's 1987 collection of sonnets about the historical figure, Samuel Sewall; Outward is one long piece of poetry in four sections. Three kinds of material woven together make the texture of this book, in which texture is all. First, excerpts from the log or journal of one David Porter, an early 19th c. captain of a frigate, are somehow transformed by Gordon into poetry. The book opens with a four-page quotation from Porter, which one assumes Gordon has edited or elided. Second, short flashings of statements by settlers, Indians, etc. over the centuries have been salvaged from town records, logs, and histories; these are placed next to each other on the page. Their beautiful broken English and wildly random spelling are oddly poetic, probably because of Gordon's great eye for selection and his judicious ellipses (three dots are everywhere). The effect is like looking into a kaleidoscope dropped by a child; the glass pieces are all there, but the pattern won't fall together quite right. One does not "read history" but is immersed in it, its back-and-forth wash, those moments when an event causes time to seem to freeze, as the light grows brighter and brighter. Time is not felt as chronological unravelling, but as little pieces of horror, violence, confusion, somehow tantalizing us to this moment, the act of reading, of considering "then" now.

The third kind of material is Gordon's own dazzling language. In his modernist mode of extreme condensation, compression, of the flashing detached image that just floats, and the startling unknitting of syntax, his freshness often feels like Ezra Pound's. (Gordon is a Pound scholar, and an editor of UMO's journal, Sagittarius, among other things, such as a translator of Tang and Sung poetry.) More precise comparisons might be to the not phrasing of an understood classic, Briggflats, by the British poet Basil Bunting. Or to the surprising verbal turns in Hart Crane's The Bridge (today sadly ignored); Gordon's is a verse of strong, unexpected verbs. the "night wind gusts in the oaks," he writes; or a "moon sun clings/ to glazed winter limbs." A star "quakes." It is a poetry of delicious assurance, not of convoluted alienation, consider how the "at sound links these lines: the late moon grapples/ cold apple limbs." Or this tour de force on the same sound: a "fishhawk stands/ fanning azure air." To sense the lean, muscular energy possible in a poet who knows exactly what he is doing with every syllable, every sound, reflect on the excerpt (printed below). Note how Gordon finds the thick-sliced sound of hull and muskellunge and immediately lightens them with the m-s and d-s of "nibbling a minnow/ now knew thinness." As the storm intensifies, the captain feels "the suave strain/ for violence we get/ these whip-lash sledge/ boat and sheathed hull—beams shuddered/ from har-keel to bilge.

Terry Plunkett
Hallowell

Excerpt from Outward, a frigate at sea

With wind's increase
night leaped down, wave-twist
rolled ship to deck's edge
in flaring night glow;
prow plunged into foam-buried wave-lair,
two deep counter-force currents
seized the hull
like a muskellunge
nibbling a minnow;
now knew thinness
of a 3/5ths plate;
felt torque of sheer stresses,
and as ship tried to rise
against plummets
kettle-drum blows,
sails' whip-lash sledge
beams shuddered
from har-keel to bilge.

David Gordon
Sheepscot
Cello suite, Bach
after a performance by Bernardine Kho

The cello is producing sound, I tell myself, through all slits in its cheeks, but actually the entire room is resonating in a language that is no one’s words, astonishing itself. Improbably memories—a sweater, anyone, color of strawberry ice, mine or somebody else’s—occur to me, as if my skull let loose a shower of recordable cells that I might see what’s in storage. I’m tripped in stress and trash until a call through three chefs steals me. Bone-caged heart flocks to passion in the servant of the cell’s face, eyes track his left-hand fingers, which know the notes for themselves. How does our world allow this, so volatile, mercurial, so deeply nummaged, cast so it allows for no collusion?

And then the chords! I’m old enough to roll my head, surge on tearing throat lung and clavicle, out, a scaring barely to be endured by the poor consciousness, whose changes replicate the beast that came to rest, her eyes now fire that all can read.

Lee Sharkey
So. China
is a teacher

Talisman

When I left your land I emptied my pockets—ticket stubs, centimes, the odd key. I exposed the linings so tight. Later, years later, I put my hand inside and touched the dark, soft as the hollow of your elbow, intact, welcoming. I carry it with me everywhere I go.

Wendy Kindred
Ft. Kent

teaches at UMFK

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My ex-husband left this morning for Bermuda to play in a tennis tournament, leaving me his dog, who is too big for my house; our kids; and instructions on how to get into his house through a second-story window in case of an emergency.

I’m working on a sure-fire money maker: a story in less than fifty words. Typed onto index cards, stories like that could hang from the rear-view mirror in a car to read en route to a tennis tournament and then feed the imagination through traffic jams. Or against the bathroom mirror to work from between drillings. Or on the bathroom mirror for nothing time.

Well, look: from that one you know a lot about her. You know she’s divorced and has kids. If you’re paying attention, you know she shares custody because otherwise he wouldn’t have left the kids with her, he would have just left.

You know her ex is rich. Relatively. I mean you don’t exactly know that some weeks she doesn’t have enough money to do the laundry, but you know she has a small house, and he’s got a big one plus airplane tickets, and you could surmise that she survived the divorce nicely. You could assume he’s got old money, since Bermuda’s a place for preppies. And you’d be right.

You know he’s an athlete. I mean he’s old enough to have kids and he’s still gallivanting off to play tennis. From the bit about the second-story window you could assume that she’s an athlete, too. Or, you could assume that he’s too much of a schmuck to have made a second key.

If you’re still at it, you could wonder whether she always falls for preppies. Whether she’s remarried or has a lover. You could wonder about the kids—sex, age, smarts. Are they preppies? Not without constant clean laundry.

But you know that she’s a respectable person, because he doesn’t expect her to steal stuff from his house or read his diary or anything.

Actually, he’s an idiot. Because that’s exactly what I’m going to do. There’s probably some great material for my index cards up there.

Tally Field
Bath

teaches people how to build houses

Psalm 23: An Update

The Lord is my role-model; we have a good relationship.
He involves himself in my decision-making:
he is very supportive.
He gives me positive input:
he leads me to viable alternatives;
he makes me feel good.
Yea, even when things are not OK,
I shall have no guilt feelings: for you identify with me;
I am comfortable with your roll and stuff.
You are basically a very warm person,
even and caring;
I am fulfilled.
Surely you will always fit me into your game-plan:
and I will grow as a person.

Deborah Nicklas
Falmouth