



Sheila McLeod Arnopolous
Donald Beecher
Allen Berry
bill bissett
Debbie Cutshaw
Joseph R. De Mare
Roseanna Deerchild
Laura Hanna
Mary Kennan Herbert
dee Hobsbawn-Smith
Jefferson Holdridge
Alice Catherine Jennings
Li Jiamei
Amy Tziporah Karp
Rupert Loydell
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Christopher Moylan
Joanna Munholland
Léna Remy-Kovach

Margaret Shaw-MacKinnon
Brennan Thomas
Bill Tremblay
Tyler Turcotte
Steven N. Wingate

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EDITORIAL

It is December, and *the quint* is celebrating the first issue of its thirteenth volume. This issue of *the quint* invites its readers to enjoy the holiday season by looking back—not at 2020 but at the thirteen years of creative writing that *the quint* has been honoured to house. No quint is complete without its creative complement. Taking time for reflection, our 2020 Christmas issue offers readers opportunities to enjoy the amazing insights of our poets and short story writers. In 2006, none of us thought a small, regional journal would go global, attracting creative writers from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Middle East, and Asia. But *the quint* did, and while doing so, retained its identity as a northern nexus. Every poem and short story in *the quint* calls for careful attention and celebrates the life of the mind. The ones printed here are among those I remember best. You will find showcased a quintessential *quint*—forged from an eclectic sampling of the creative works that we have been honoured to publish. I would like to thank our generous writers whose works, presented in alphabetical order, hail from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and China: poets Donald Beecher, Allen Berry, bill bissett, Roseanna Deerchild, Laura Hanna, Mary Kennan Herbert, dee Hobsbawn-Smith, Jefferson Holdridge, Alice Catherine Jennings, Amy Tziporah Karp, Rupert Loydell, Robert Luce, Brian MacKinnon, Dave Margoshes, Christopher Moylan, Joanna Munholland, Léna Remy-Kovach, Brennan Thomas, Bill Tremblay, and Steven N. Wingate; short fiction writers Sheila McLeod Arnopolous, Debbie Cutshaw, Joseph R. De Mare, Li Jiamei, Margaret Shaw-MacKinnon, and Tyler Turcotte.

Also backward-looking, this *quint's* visual offerings invite you to remember the beauty of the North as you read. Here's to good reading and happy memories, warm nights inside with thought-provoking words and a cup of something hot. From *the quint*, we wish you all the best the holidays can bring and very Happy New Year. *the quint* will be back in March with more offerings for reading and viewing, in time for Easter.

Sue Matheson
Editor



Sheila McLeod Arnopolous

Call of the Caribou

Danielle stood nervously at the door of the room where her Grandma Jaina lay in bed. Her father, standing behind her in the hallway of the seniors residence, had told Danielle that her seventy-five-year-old grandmother wanted to spend time with her while she still had the energy.

“Come here, granddaughter,” Grandma Jaina said, waving Danielle over to her. “It’s been a long time. I have something important to tell you.” She slowly pulled herself up from her pillow.

Grandma Jaina’s dark brown eyes still shone and her midnight black hair, in disarray around her shoulders, still gleamed. “Come up here beside me.” She reached over and stroked Danielle’s cheek bones.

“Listen carefully,” she said. “Something you should know. My mother, your great-grandmother was Mohawk.”

“Mohawk?” Danielle looked into her grandma’s eyes and drew in her breath. Why, she thought, was this kept secret?

“You’re not just French like your mother and English like my husband who took

me away from Akwesasne,” her grandma said in a faltering voice. “You’re also Mohawk. Never forget.”

“I won’t forget.”

“Come back tomorrow,” she said, a look of peace settling in her eyes. “We will talk. But now I must rest.”

Over the years, Danielle had seen almost nothing of her Grandma Jaina. Christmas and other holidays were always at Grand-mère Monique’s house, in the east end of Montreal, with the big Québécois family. Grandma Jaina was never invited.

Danielle stayed close to her grandmother, holding her hand until she fell asleep. Then she walked slowly out of the room into the hall where her father was waiting for her.

“Let’s have a coffee,” he said, taking her arm and guiding her to a small family room. “Later I’ll drive you to your class.”

“Why didn’t you tell me about our Mohawk roots?” Danielle asked, her hand shaking around the handle of her coffee cup.

“Your mother,” he said, “never wanted you to know. She was proud of her French heritage and you were her daughter. I respected her wishes.”

Danielle looked at her father in disbelief. “I was also yours,” she said.

When Danielle was eleven her father, a math teacher in the English school system, divorced her mother and moved away from Montreal. For many years she rarely saw him or her grandmother.

“Why did you listen to her?” she shot out.

“I grew up being part First Nations. At school, in the 1950s, I was the outsider. I

didn’t want you to suffer the way I did.”

Danielle was silent, trying to understand. “But now everything is different,” she said. The Mohawk stand-off last year woke people up. 1990 changed everything. You won’t believe this, but out of interest I’m taking a First Peoples course at the college.”

“You are?” he said, his eyes lighting up. He threw back his head of thick dark hair. “You must tell your grandma.”

* * *

That night, when Danielle returned home from classes, she confronted her mother about her Mohawk origins. “Grandma Jaina told me today,” she said, “at the seniors residence.”

“*Pas vrai*,” her mother barked. “She lies. That old woman has dementia.”

Danielle boiled with resentment. “Grandma Jaina has emphysema, but her mind is clear, completely clear,” and without waiting for her mother’s reply, she turned on her heel. After that, seeking to stay close to her grandmother, Danielle went at least twice a week with her father to the residence. One afternoon, her grandma suggested Danielle look into the Mohawk standoff from the year before. “Learn about the struggles of your people. Talk to the women,” she counselled.

When Danielle announced to her mother that she was off to Kanesatake to do interviews about the land crisis, her mother screwed up her nose and said, “*Un énorme gaspillage de temps* – a huge waste of time.”

“You should know,” Danielle said defiantly, “that I’m enrolled in a First Peoples course at the college.”

“What?” her mother snapped. “Remember who you are. You’re Québécoise. *Point*

finale. You're only eighteen. What do you know? Les sauvages could destroy the future of Quebec.

"How?" Danielle asked, seething with indignation at hearing her mother call Indigenous people *sauvage*.

"When Quebec votes to become a separate country, those people could ruin everything." Her mouth quivered with outrage. "They could demand to remain in Canada. That's what they're threatening."

"Well," Danielle countered, "they were here first. They have rights."

* * *

Upset at these exchanges with her mother, Danielle decided to move out. She found part-time work and took an apartment with Saraphina, her best friend who was also studying at the college.

On her next visit with her grandmother, she talked about her First Peoples course and her interview in Kanesatake with spokesperson Ellen Gabriel.

"Stay in contact with her," her grandmother advised, holding tight to Danielle's hand. "You can learn from her. She's becoming an important leader."

"Why don't you write up your interview with her for the college paper," she said.

Danielle thought about her grandma Jaina's words. I've always liked writing, she thought. Now I have something to write about.

"Very good," said her grandma when Danielle showed her the article. "It reads very well. You should do more of this."

"But now I want to hear about *your* life," said Danielle. Tell me what it was like

when you were a child in Akwesasne."

"When I was a child?" her grandmother mused. "My best memories were when I went fishing with my grandfather in the *kaniatarowanenneh*. She paused. "That's the big waterway, the St. Lawrence River."

"But at home things were tough, especially for my mother. I remember the day," she said, her voice weakening, "when a priest came to our house and grabbed away my brother."

"Why?" Danielle asked.

"For residential school. He was only seven. I can still hear his screams." She shuddered at the memory. "Thanks to my mother, who hid me, I was saved. We were not the only family who faced this scourge," she said. "There were many others."

"My brother never spoke about the abuse he endured," she said with a resigned look in her eyes. "For several years, wanting to forget, he took off, just disappeared. Later he worked in the oil refineries in the east end. He died during the Normandy invasion, in the Second World War, probably on purpose."

"Abuse?" Danielle later asked her father.

"The kids," he said, "were forbidden to speak their mother tongue. Part of the attempt by the government and the churches to stamp out the cultures of First Nations, something you'll learn about in your course."

"There was also physical and sexual abuse. I have letters my uncle wrote secretly to my grandmother. Some day I'll show them to you."

* * *

The First Peoples course Danielle was taking included a field trip to Great Whale village in northern Quebec. Danielle told her Grandma Jaina about it. “We’ll stay with Cree families near Hudson’s Bay.”

Her grandmother’s face warmed at this news. “The Cree are also struggling. Get involved. Find a way to help, maybe by writing about them too. Take notes on what you learn.

She took Danielle’s hand. “Perhaps writing about social issues is your destiny,” she said. “Think about it.”

Danielle found the idea daunting. “I don’t know enough to do that.”

“You can learn,” her grandma said. “You’re already on a good path.”

Danielle’s commitment to explore the world of First Nations deepened the closer she grew to her grandmother. But unwilling to face an inevitable argument, she did not inform her mother about her trip to meet Cree in northern Quebec.

Instead, she shared everything with Saraphina’s handsome brother Jonas. She had known him since they were young. He always hung around when she visited Saraphina who used to tease him, saying he had a crush on Danielle. It was true, but the feeling was mutual and since high school he had been her boyfriend, even though her mother disapproved.

Jonas, who came from mixed parentage, Brazilian and Haitian, was studying at Concordia University’s School of Community and Public Affairs. When she told him about her Grandma Jaina, he said, “I too could have aboriginal ancestry.”

* * *

As soon as Danielle arrived in Great Whale, her host, Kimi, an author of children’s books

and a teacher of Cree in the local school, went out of her way to make Danielle feel like a member of the family, as did her son Elijah. The next day Kimi showed her the books she had written based on Cree legends, making Danielle eager to explore Mohawk ones.

A few days after they arrived, Elijah and Kimi invited the students to a special caribou dinner.

Around a fire, sitting cross-legged on the ground, eating caribou meat off the bones, they listened attentively when Elijah rose to speak.

“If we’re not careful, we’ll lose our traditional way of life. We’ve got to keep our land,” he said.

“Our people in Chisasibi lost their trap-lines to reservoirs. Now the fish are poisoned,” he said. “All because of Hydro Quebec.” He flinched with anger. “The same thing could happen to us. Hydro and Quebec must be stopped from ever damming Great Whale River.”

The next day, as a special gift, Kimi gave Danielle a caribou-skin jacket that she had sewn. It matched the one Elijah wore.

“Beautiful,” she told Kimi, so proud of this special Cree gift that she could show her grandmother.

“C’mon Danielle.” Elijah took her outside to his all-terrain-vehicle for a ride into the hills overlooking Hudson’s Bay. “I want you to see our land.” They bumped over the sand dunes and up to a craggy hilltop outside the village.

Surrounded by a riot of wild flowers, her hair blowing in the wind, Danielle stood silently next to him and looked down at the mouth of Great Whale River flowing into the expanse of Hudson’s Bay. The raw beauty of the place filled her with wonder. She breathed in the fresh smell and tied up her long hair into a ponytail.

“Straight and dark, just like ours,” Elijah said as he watched her.

Danielle was keen to tell Elijah about her First Nations origins but held back, ashamed that she knew so little about her Mohawk family. She had never even visited Akwesasne, although her father promised to take her to the reserve upon her return. She was learning, however, about the history of the Mohawks close to Montreal and across North America.

Elijah looked down into Hudson’s Bay. “In a few weeks,” he said, “we’re heading into the bush for the caribou hunt. My true home isn’t in a house in Whapmagoostui,” he continued, using the Cree word for Great Whale village. “It’s in the bush. Come back and I’ll show you what Cree life is really like.”

“I would love to,” she said. She wanted to experience First Nations life from the inside, not just from interviews and books. She could learn a lot from Elijah.

Standing next to him, breathing in the crisp air, she envied him his full-blooded Cree identity and his passion for his people. He was part of a team challenging the right of Hydro-Québec to dam Great Whale River. The year before, he’d paddled a canoe to New York City with other Cree and Inuit and asked the state to break their agreement to buy Hydro power from Quebec. He had a mission.

They sat down in the grass and from the pocket of his jeans, Elijah pulled out some dried caribou meat wrapped in wax paper and gave her a piece. “Activism isn’t enough. I’m planning to take a law degree at McGill. To protect ourselves, we must use the courts. We must represent our own people, ourselves,” he insisted, “in our own way. You understand?”

* * *

Two days later, the night before the students were to leave for home, Danielle learned the plans had changed. “We’re spending a whole day in James Bay. At the La Grande Complex. Hydro is giving us a tour,” she told Elijah.

Elijah groaned. Kimi, who was busy writing at her desk in the living room, looked up and shook her head in dismay.

Elijah clenched his fists. “If you want to know what’s really happening to us, make sure the Hydro people show you the monument to our ancestors that’s next to the reservoir.”

Drained of colour, Kimi stood up, walked past them and went outside.

“What’s wrong?” Danielle asked.

“My grandfather, who taught me how to hunt, is buried on a trap line that belonged to our people, long before your precious Jacques Cartier arrived. “Now,” he fumed, “his body lies under the reservoir at La Grande.”

Danielle shrank at the mention of Jacques Cartier. Without thinking she blurted out, “I’m much more than just French and English. My great-grandmother was full-blood Mohawk.”

“I’m not surprised,” he said, “given the way you look. My mother noticed it right away. Why didn’t you tell us before?” He gave her a penetrating look. “Are you ashamed of your First Nations background?”

Danielle’s face flushed. “I felt I didn’t know enough to say. I found out only a few weeks ago from my grandmother. Through the First Peoples course, I’m learning more. I’ve even written about the Mohawk in Kanasatake.”

“Now I understand,” Elijah said. “Listen. I’ll show up at the La Grande complex so the students can hear about the Cree experience. The band council has a Cessna plane I

can take.”

After breakfast the next day, at their morning meeting of students, Danielle told their coordinator, Caroline about the Cree monument and how Elijah would be there to talk to the students about it.

A few hours later, Caroline showed up at Kimi’s house. “Danielle,” she said, “Moira just called me from Montreal. She wants you to take a leadership role on the Hydro tour.” So much was happening so quickly, Danielle thought.

“Moira is going to call you here,” she looked at her watch, “in a few minutes.”

“I hope that’s okay,” Caroline said to Kimi, seated at her desk, listening.

“Of course,” said Kimi. Fingering the short braid she wore curled over her shoulder, she stood up and ushered them into the kitchen.

When the phone rang, Kimi picked up the receiver and handed it to Danielle. She and Elijah stood by quietly with Caroline. The phone was on speaker so they could all hear the conversation.

“Danielle,” said Moira. “I understand you’ve become friends with an important Cree family. I assume you’re taking notes, not just for the course, but for an article for the college paper.”

“Yes, yes,” said Danielle, glancing over to Kimi who gave her an encouraging smile. Every night before she went to bed, she’d written down what she’d learned that day.

“Hydro is offering a bus tour where they’ll talk about the glories of the dam and electricity. Caroline told me that the young man where you’re billeted is prepared to present the Cree side of things.

“I’d like you to be in charge of the group. The college is paying for the transport. Therefore, you can call the shots.”

Me, call the shots? Danielle thought.

“You okay with that?”

“Yes,” Danielle said, grateful that her teacher believed in her. Did Moira suspect she was part First Nations? Is this why she’d picked her to act as leader?

When she hung up, Kimi gave her a hug, and Danielle felt a surge of self-confidence.

The phone rang again. Kimi picked up the receiver, and then handed it over to Danielle. “It’s your teacher again.”

“Something I should tell you,” said Moira, clearing her throat. “Your mother has been calling the college, demanding to know where you are.”

“What!” Danielle gulped, embarrassed that everyone could hear.

“Look,” she leapt right in. “She’s enraged that I’m studying and writing about First Peoples. She’s an extreme indépendantiste. I’m an adult. I support myself. I live away from home. She has no right . . .”

“Just wanted you to know,” said Moira and she hung up.

Danielle slumped over her elbows on the kitchen table. Everyone was quiet. Now they knew her mother was against their people. She felt ashamed. After Caroline left, Elijah patted Danielle on the shoulder and Kimi poured her a cup of tea. They understood, she thought, making her feel even more dedicated to becoming a fulltime journalist about Indigenous questions. Like Elijah, she too would have a mission.

* * *

“I’ve been put in charge of the group,” said Danielle the next day to Lise Hébert, the

guide on the Hydro Québec bus tour. “I believe our first stop should be the monument to the Cree.”

“It’s not on our itinerary,” said Madame Hébert.

“It is now,” said Danielle.

Approaching the huge reservoir, Elijah was waiting for them at the edge of the water, standing tall in his caribou jacket.

At the monument, Danielle and the students clustered around Elijah. “You’re looking at sacred burial grounds,” he announced. “My grandfather lies under these waters.”

In a voice ringing with emotion, Elijah said, “Our Cree ancestors who, having lived off this land for thousands of years, now rest under the waters of the reservoirs of the La Grande complex.”

While he spoke, Danielle thought about her heritage. She was a mixture of cultures, like Saraphina and Jonas, but who in Canada wasn’t?

Elijah looked at each one of the students. “Let us have a moment of silence,” he said.

Back in the bus, en route to the power station, Elijah and Danielle sat at the rear while Madame Hébert called out facts and figures about the La Grande complex. Elijah rolled his eyes as he listened.

“Eleven thousand five hundred and five square kilometres of land flooded by reservoirs, 10,282 megawatts of generating capacity, 215 dikes and dams,” Madame Hébert said with pride. “The land-fill that was moved to create these dikes and dams was enough to build the Great Pyramid of Cheops eighty times over!”

Elijah held himself still. He didn’t have to say a word. These facts, Danielle recognized, as she took notes, spoke volumes about the devastation to the land and the Cree, all at the hands of Quebec’s French majority, she thought, with a pang of guilt. Taking it all in, the

students sat in hushed silence.

The bus headed toward the power station at La Grande-2 where turbines generated electricity that the Quebec government expected would one day help light up New York City. The students took an elevator deep into the earth.

“Twenty-three stories underground,” Madame Hébert said. The doors opened to a vast concrete bunker the size of several football fields. Harsh neon lights burned from the ceiling several storeys above. A narrow steel balcony with bars stretched across one side.

“We call this the cathedral,” she said. Elijah raised his eyebrows at her in distain. “A Québécois sculpture called Marie Quebec, honouring the workers who built the complex, lies at the front. Follow me,” she said.

“Marie Québec,” Madame Hébert murmured in front of the sculpture, as though she were in church kneeling at the feet of the Virgin Mary. While Danielle snapped a photo of it, she thought of her mother forcing her to attend mass at Christmas.

Elijah took a few steps away from the group and raised his arms. “Our Lady of the Turbines,” he sang out to the far corners of “the cathedral” like an Italian tenor while Danielle captured him on film.

“Bravo,” Danielle called out and the students clapped. “*Merci, merci*, Danielle said under her breath, so happy that they were all on the same side.

* * *

At the end of the tour, outside the power station, Elijah said, “I have a band council meeting back in Whapmagoostui. I have to go. I’ll phone you about the caribou hunt. Come with your boyfriend.

“When you’re back in Montreal,” he said, “go to the office of the Grand Council of the Cree. I’ll tell them you’re coming. We’re planning a trip to the New England states. Please join us. Maybe you could write about it for the student press.”

Yes, yes, Danielle thought. Moira would help her. Jonas could also lend a hand, maybe taking photographs, which he liked to do.

A Cree man on an all-terrain-vehicle pulled up and Elijah jumped on. “Stay in touch,” he said.

* * *

A year later, late one night, Danielle received a phone call from Elijah. Since starting her major in Indigenous studies at McGill University, she and Jonas saw him regularly.

“Guess what!” he said, breathlessly. “New York has cancelled their billion-dollar hydroelectric contract with Quebec. They listened to us! Our protests in the States paid off.

“But our work isn’t over,” he said. We’ll continue our lawsuit at the federal level against the Great Whale project.”

“Let me know about every step of your progress,” said Danielle. “I’ll continue to write news articles.”

“What you and Jonas have been doing is terrific. Many of your stories along with Jonas’ photos have been picked up by Indigenous papers across the country.”

“Really?” she said, knowing how proud her grandma would be to hear that.

“You’re making a name as a First Nations journalist.”

* * *

Over the next two years, Elijah was busy with his law studies and his work with the Grand Council of the Cree. But he stayed in touch with Danielle and updated her on actions to stop the damming of Great Whale River.

While working on her degree at McGill, she continued to write about the Great Whale issue. At the same time, she kept him informed about her research on residential school survivors in Akwesasne. She wanted to do right by her grandma Jaina’s brother and others who didn’t survive the horror.

One day in 1994, Danielle received a call from Elijah in Whapmagoostui. “Good news,” Elijah shouted over the phone. “Quebec is dropping the Great Whale project! We’ve won! Premier Parizeau will announce it tomorrow. He wants to shut us up in the run-up to the referendum on sovereignty,” he said. “Not that this will do it. Now,” he said, “my mother wants to talk to you.”

“Danielle,” said Kimi. “Next weekend we’re planning a huge celebration. We want you to come. After all, you’ve become one of us.”

“Oh Kimi,” she said. “Thank you.” She could hardly wait to tell her grandmother, still at the seniors residence, that now the Cree saw her as one of them.

“Come with Jonas,” Kimi continued, “the two of you have been part of our team.”

“We’ll be there,” Danielle said and made a note to buy a new pair of pants to wear with the caribou jacket Kimi had made for her three years before. “I wouldn’t miss it for the world.”

Out of Step

After parking her bike, Pamela slipped into the Nantucket heritage house for the cocktail party filled with Wall Street notables hosted by Jimmy's childhood friend Lindy, the maid-of-honour for the next day's "destination wedding."

"Interesting necklace," commented a sleek-looking woman standing next to her in a dazzling diamond choker. "Where did you get it?"

"Tunisia," Pamela said. "Represents the hand of Fatima, daughter of the Prophet, designed to ward off evil."

"Tunisia? What on earth were you doing there?" and looked her up and down.

Pamela was wearing a Tunisian rainbow-striped *kmijja* chemise over blue pants which she thought suitable for a summer cocktail party on this holiday island in Massachusetts, but maybe it was too folksy for this upscale New York City financial crowd. "I'm an anthropologist," said Pamela. "I was studying women in business and in politics. Post Arab Spring."

"Arab women in business? Talk about an oxymoron." She jerked back her neck. "They need a male guardian to go out, don't they? Aren't they forbidden to drive?"

"Saudi Arabia in the past. Tunisia's more advanced. But even in Saudi, women do run businesses, like car dealerships." She pitched that in for fun although it was true.

"What are you doing here?" she asked a little too pointedly.

"I'm Jimmy's friend."

"Really?" She frowned. "The Filipino guy in the kitchen? The pick-up driver for the help and the food?"

"Jimmy," Pamela retorted, "is a tenure-track professor at McGill University where we teach in Montreal. An old friend of Lindy's from high school. A big authority on cheap labour in China."

"Is that right?" she said absentmindedly.

Well, Pamela thought, the last thing this woman would probably care about was slave labour. Everyone here, she figured, was in high finance. A Hispanic woman in a starched black and white uniform was passing around *hors d'oeuvres*. Pamela helped herself to smoked salmon daintily laid out on neat squares of bread and wondered whether the servers were being properly paid.

"I've been coming to the island of Nantucket to bicycle for years," Pamela said. "Jimmy and I drove down together from Montreal. He suggested I come along tonight to meet Lindy."

"I see," said the woman and turned to talk to someone else.

Earlier, Jimmy had filled Pamela in on Lindy's story, how she came from North Korea to Toronto at three with her parents. They had no education, but working overtime, had saved and put their daughter through the Harvard School of Business.

Pamela picked up a glass of white wine offered by another server and for a moment strolled along the hall of this mansion that had once belonged to a whaling captain.

Old prints of whaling vessels that had plied the waters around Nantucket in the 1800s decked the walls. Milling around were sharp young women in their late thirties sporting expensive designer pants, striking jewellery and elegantly-coiffed hair.

Tall and slim in a crimson pant suit, Lindy in ruby and diamond-studded earrings suddenly sailed across the room. “Hello Pamela,” she said and shook her hand. “Jimmy has told me all about you.”

“A lovely party,” said Pamela. “I understand you’re maid-of-honour tomorrow.”

“Yes.”

“What will you be wearing?”

“Pale green silk, emeralds around the neckline, ballerina length. You should see it.” Her face lit up. “Haute couture, one-of-a-kind, from New York’s best bridal boutique. “The bride’s my best friend. The wedding took months to organize. I helped choose the gowns,” Lindy said, her eyes scanning the room as she spoke. “We’re associates at the same firm. Elvira will wear a tiara, with pink diamonds, inherited from a White Russian ancestor. Aristocratic. The groom is president of a bank.”

As Maid of Honour, she was worried about doing all the right things for the pre-wedding event Eliva had entrusted her to set up in this mansion that she had decided to rent as accommodation for the bridesmaids. She fanned her sweat-soaked face with her hand, nervous about her make-up running. She had used bleach cream on her face and always wore sunscreen, but looking around, she definitely looked different. Nantucket was white, just like the bridesmaids and wedding guests. That’s why at the last minute, she had asked Jimmy to help out, rather than have him sit around as some kind of guest

where he would stick out.

Lindy continued to glance across the room filled with animated young women and a sprinkling of distinguished older men. She wanted to be a proper host and hoped she could remember all the guests’ names. “Gotta go,” she said to Pamela and rushed across the room to shake hands with a bank vice-president.

Pamela looked with admiration at the women, real pioneers of the post-feminist generation cracking into the formidable male bastion of finance. She especially admired Lindy’s rise up the ladder, given her childhood as the daughter of poor working-class Korean immigrants.

Jimmy had told Pamela he hadn’t seen his childhood friend for ten years, but they’d kept in touch by email. When he visited his family in Toronto, he always dropped in on her parents, but Lindy, he said, was too busy flying around the world on business, and rarely saw them these days. “Her mom and dad are my second family,” Jimmy explained on the drive down. “I just bet her mom pushed Lindy to invite me to Nantucket. ‘You and Lindy are like brother and sister,’ she always says. ‘You must never lose touch.’”

Jimmy’s invitation for the long weekend coincided with Pamela’s desire to return to Nantucket where she loved to bicycle and swim in the unusually warm water. She adored the spotless beaches and ordering lobsters. Fast food places were banned which also appealed. They decided to travel down together in Pamela’s car with their bikes attached. The day before, they’d left her Honda in Hyannis on Cape Cod and taken the ferry to the island.

This was Pamela’s first trip to Nantucket since her husband Craig’s unexpected

death. She was staying outside town at a rooming house near the one youth hostel where she could make her own breakfast and avoid high-priced hotel rooms. It was Jimmy's idea that she drop into the cocktail party to meet his old friend and have a drink before they went out to eat at her favourite lobster place.

"Hi Pamela," said Jimmy, emerging from the kitchen in a black and white apron over his jeans. With a final tray of drinks, he circulated around observing the guests and listened to their conversations as the cocktail party wound down. Pamela noted that she was the oldest woman in the room and also wearing the least expensive outfit. Luckily, she thought, she'd tinted up her graying hair with henna before she left.

"I'm ready to leave," he said when his tray was empty. He ripped off his apron and stashed it behind a sofa. "I've already driven the serving ladies home, in a black Cadillac, no less," and he crossed his eyes.

"What?" Pamela said. "They still exist?"

"Around here they do. Lindy rented one at the airport."

What a waste, Pamela thought. Lindy probably felt she had to get a Cadillac, of all things, even when a much less flashy car would do.

They took off on their bicycles down cobbled streets to a hidden lobster take-out shack on an old track facing the ocean. At a rough wooden table on the beach, they sat down and tucked into their lobsters.

"So...?" Pamela said. "How's it going with Lindy after all this time?"

"Out *sa paningin*," Jimmy muttered in Filipino. "Out of sight. I hardly recognize

my old friend. What a change! All too weird. When we were growing up," he cracked the tail of his lobster, "Lindy always wore hand-me-downs because her parents had no money. Lindy's dad swept floors in a factory and her mother worked as a hotel maid."

Pamela knew that Jimmy's father, an engineer, had had it easier, eventually finding work with a top international construction company. His mother now ran a flower shop that specialized in tropical flowers.

"Today, Lindy's parents have it better," he said. "They run a Korean grocery, drive a car, and live in a nice Toronto condo that Lindy bought for them." He went on to describe how Lindy boasted about how she'd flown them to Paris to show off the condo she'd bought over there. "That's in addition to the one she owns in New York," he said.

Here was a story about the child of working-class immigrants rising up in society. The American dream that had started in Canada. Good for Lindy, Pamela thought. However, Jimmy went on to complain that now he and his old friend had nothing in common.

"She's such a high-fallutin' capitalist," he sneered, "she refused to take an interest in my research tracking down child labourers in China. Pretty disappointing," but pointed out that in contrast, Lindy's mom admired Jimmy's work and encouraged him to expose everything he could.

"Well," she said. "You and Lindy are on different paths but think of it this way. You're both super successful."

"That's not how my parents see it," he said with a shrug. "They look up to people who have blasted their way onto Wall Street. But the academic world? What, my father

asked me, do you get out of hanging around Chinese workers at the bottom of the ladder? For them, Lindy's made it, and I haven't. But wheeling around in finance? Shoring up the bloody one per cent? Who knows what she shelled out to rent the whaling mansion for the weekend!"

Pamela dipped some lobster meat into melted butter. "I have to admit. I've been wondering the same thing."

"I just bet Lindy knows owners of companies hiring slave labour over there in China," he said. "She quickly changed the subject when I told her I was learning Mandarin so I could talk to the workers."

Jimmy swung back his long black hair, which looked just as out of place at the cocktail party as her Tunisian *kmijja*.

"After all the demeaning jobs her parents endured to put her through school," he said, "you'd think she'd show some interest."

Jimmy twisted the claws off his lobster. "Her colleagues are just like her," he kept on. "Did you hear that woman from the drug company boasting about the medical research she's supervising in Africa? Reminded me of the vicious exploitation that John Le Carré wrote about in The Constant Gardener."

Pamela's father had been president of a drug company. With a twinge of discomfort, she realized she still owned company shares that she'd inherited from him, so she was probably not without sin. She'd done good work researching the progress of Arab women in Tunisia and the plight of Indigenous women in Canada. However, she'd been able to take time off from teaching only because her father had left her money, money that

probably should have gone to the very kinds of people she had always championed.

She dug into a corn on the cob that came with the lobster. "Come on," she said. "Everyone in the financial field isn't evil," and thought of her stockbroker, Sally, specializing in green energy stocks, and in her spare time still offering financial advice to abused older women at a downtown shelter. They were all in this capitalist consumer society together. The university that paid their salaries received lots of corporate money, made who knows where.

"Lindy's your friend," she insisted. "You have a childhood in common. She's giving you a free room here in Nantucket, home to pristine beaches." Pamela kicked off her sandals and let the sand sift through her toes. "You can swim in the lovely ocean every day."

Jimmy pulled the tail off his lobster, "Yes, and for that, I'm doing my bit, earning my keep. Lindy's recruited me to drive some stockbrokers staying at the White Elephant to and from the wedding tomorrow. Limousines, thankfully, will take her and the bridesmaids to the church."

He looked out at the sandpipers running across the beach and rested his cheek on his knuckles. "But I can take only so much of this. She's turned me into her houseboy. It's humiliating."

"Just go with the flow," Pamela said. Lindy, she could imagine, was depending upon Jimmy to help her out. "Soon it will be over. Tomorrow, I'll drop into the back of the church so I can tell Lindy after how beautiful she looked. Weddings can be magical. Lindy deserves support for all the planning she did."

Jimmy said nothing.

Pamela thought of the marriage of her stepdaughter, Crystal, five years before after she finished medical school at McGill and how beautiful she had looked in her white dress trimmed with multi-coloured embroidery. She ate the remains of her lobster and looked out to sea. Crystal was now thirty-one, also a non-traditional woman making her mark. She was a family doctor and mother to an adorable three-year-old girl. She had enjoyed stepping in to become a mother to her, maybe more, she had to admit, than being a wife to Craig who had been so consumed by his physics research.

* * *

The next morning, after a swim at Surfside Beach, Pamela biked from her rooming house to the imposing Congregational Church with its bell tower offering the best view of Nantucket. While a student, she had played the organ at inter-religious weddings at the McGill University chapel and she was looking forward to hearing the organ music and watching the wedding procession.

On the street outside the church, Jimmy was sitting alone in the driver's seat of the Cadillac reading a book. "Hi," she said, "aren't you going in?"

"No. Lindy told me to wait here to drive people to the reception after the ceremony. Besides, I don't have a proper suit." He was wearing a clean pair of jeans and a fresh blue T-shirt.

"A church is a public place. Anyone can go in, at any time, and you look fine. Maybe Lindy would like it if you could see her in her finery."

"I'll just stay here and play chauffeur," he said in a long-suffering voice. "Come back later to the whaling house. We'll go out again for supper. I like that take-out place we went to yesterday."

"Okay." Pamela tied her bike to a fence post and bounded up the steps of the church to the sound of the Wagner bridal march, missing the procession down the aisle. Maybe Jimmy was right to wonder about his clothes. She was wearing three-quarter length jeans trimmed with lace, and since it was drizzling, a yellow raincoat, but she would sit at the back of the church where no one could see her.

"Are you here for the wedding?" asked a young woman in the lobby.

"I'm not a guest," Pamela said. "I know the maid-of-honour. Just here to see the dresses and hear the music."

"Great. Hang your raincoat here," she said, indicating a hook. "Go right in."

The ceremony had begun and Pamela sat concealed in the back row behind a pillar. The church was packed with women in cocktail dresses and men in suits. An arrangement of roses in a dazzling array of pinks and reds marked the entrance to every pew while a fuchsia-coloured rug littered with rose petals covered the aisle to the altar, spread, Pamela assumed, by the flower girls at the front. Twinkling chandeliers hung overhead. So different from her step-daughter's simple wedding with only her small bouquet of lily-of-the-valley in the McGill chapel with family and a few friends.

Pamela was in time for the wedding vows and the exchange of rings. During the signing of the marriage documents, a quintet played Schubert's famous Trout Quintet. The opulence of the final procession to Mendelssohn's Wedding March down the aisle and

out the church felt straight out of an Italian opera. The four bridesmaids in rhinestone tiaras were in fairy tale pink on the arms of handsome ushers in black tuxedos. Maid-of-honour Lindy, wearing a headband of multi-coloured gems, was stunning in her pastel green silk dress adorned with emeralds. Pamela couldn't wait to tell her how beautiful she looked.

In her pink diamond floral tiara, the blond-haired bride, holding a bouquet of pink orchids gazed up in awe at her distinguished-looking husband. She swished by in her ivory-white wedding gown trimmed at the neck with rose gems and tiny pearls. Two smiling six-year-old twin girls in fluffy organdy dresses held her flowing train. What a choreography! Pamela thought.

When Pamela believed the wedding party and all the guests were out of the building, she entered the lobby and had a long chat with the woman she had met on the way in. She was a recent theology graduate, Pamela discovered, in charge of Sunday services for the summer, but a clergyman imported from New York had performed the wedding.

“Exquisite dresses,” Pamela said.

The woman looked annoyed. “I noticed. These destination weddings,” she shrugged, “they’re a lot of bother. This morning, very early, hired men arrived with a lavish rug for the aisle. Then the truck full of flowers. After that, the heavy Steinway piano for the quintet from the Julliard School of Music.”

“The Julliard School!” said Pamela. “No wonder they were so good.”

“Well,” she said with a look of resignation, “with these millionaires, in a place like Nantucket, only the best!”

* * *

Pamela arrived on her bike at the whaling captain's mansion as the sun was setting. She wondered how Lindy had managed at the reception but now everything was over. Through the wide-open windows, she heard a fiery conversation going on inside.

“What do you mean she spoiled the whole scene?” said Jimmy. He sounded angry.

“This was a destination wedding,” said Lindy. “Every detail was planned. Like a set for a Broadway musical. With the crème de la crème of Wall Street closely watching!”

Pamela recognized the voice of the bridesmaid who had commented on her necklace. She chipped in with, “There was your friend in a pew at the back. Not even in a cocktail dress. Uninvited. And in what?” She screamed. “Jeans!”

Pamela shrank in horror. They were talking about her. She had no idea anyone from the wedding party had seen her at the church. She crouched down on the grass and wondered whether she should just bike away and call Jimmy later on his cell phone. She had really goofed up. This place was no Montreal, where even the homeless sometimes flopped in churches, and no one paid attention.

“After the wedding,” said Lindy, “I saw her talking in the lobby to the minister of the church. Is this what you anthropologists do?”

“Listen here,” said Jimmy in an authoritative voice Pamela couldn't help admiring, “a church is a public place. You don't own it. Anyone can come in at any time, wedding or no wedding.” That's what she had told Jimmy, but obviously in this place it was not true. “Also,” he went on, “I just bet the financial big wigs never noticed.”

“If I noticed,” said Lindy, “others did too.”

Pamela rubbed her eyes. Did she look that bad? The young minister didn't think so. She'd practically ushered her in. For a moment, she thought about her father, an elder at the Presbyterian church when she was growing up, always making her wear her Sunday best to church. This was not relevant, or maybe it was.

Pamela suddenly felt sorry for Lindy. Her survival in wildly competitive New York surely depended upon impressing the financial kingpins and conforming to social proprieties. Given her interest in women and minorities, she could understand. She thought of the highly-skilled Tunisian women she had met in Montreal in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, and their struggle to be accepted in the Montreal workplace, even though they spoke good French. Trying to survive as a visible minority today, in this era of populism, wasn't easy.

Now, in addition to tripping up, she had painted her protégé Jimmy into an awkward corner with his old school friend. Jimmy looked as though he had been tossed around by a hurricane when he stumbled out of the mansion into the front garden. Pamela scrambled up from the grass.

"I can't stay a day longer with these foolish people," he said as they wheeled their bikes to the sidewalk. He stood still and gritted his teeth.

Sweating profusely, Pamela fretted that she have known better. As an anthropologist, how could she have made such a mistake!

"Lindy expects me to stay until Monday, to clean up, houseboy style," he said. "Well, to hell with it. Tomorrow, let's get the fuck out of here. We can go to Provincetown."

"You sure?" Pamela felt faint.

"Dead sure," he replied. "I won't go into it. I just don't fit in."

"Look." Pamela tried to sound self-possessed. "I heard everything."

"You did?"

"There's an anthropological lesson here," she jumped in. "On the pitfalls of participant observation." If sitting in the back row of a church and observing a destination wedding could be called that. Jimmy kicked the curb of the sidewalk in exasperation.

"I made a big mistake. Lindy lives in male, straight, WASP New York. Surely, you of all people can understand that!" She wondered how much discrimination Lindy had to face, regularly, especially in these times under President Donald Trump.

"Don't make excuses for her," said Jimmy who claimed his brown skin and ethnic origins had never held him back. Well, Pamela thought, that was because he was a male doing research in developing countries. Also McGill was trying to be more diverse.

"Please," he said. "Lay off being politically correct."

Pamela was grateful for Jimmy's concern for her, but she felt at fault.

"Open your ears," he said and tossed Pamela a smile. "I've got an alibi for an escape from here. Just watch me," he said, echoing a famous phrase by former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.

"Our department chair just texted me," he said in a resounding voice. "He needs to see me right away." He whirled around and faced the house. "For a course on slave labour in the Third World," he shot into the air.

"Take that," he said under his breath, "you capitalist hussies!"



Donald Beecher

Bologna Haiku

At the Unicredit Bank
Withdrawing and withdrawing
An elderly man and wife

The bank machine
At the leaning pine serves
An elderly couple

Piano nobile
Over the “Tavola Fredda”
Solid Palladio

Sunday streets
Whispering couples pass
Gelateria.

Caffè déjà vu
On the street of blacksmiths
Just at rifle way

A rose is a rose
In lustrous polymers
So white, so green.

Seeing polaroid
The colour of plastic roses
In the rain.

Imported from China,
Fuchsias, lilies, roses
Balconies high.

Umberto p(r)esante
Già coronata, di (n)uovo
L'uomo grande, e(c)co!

Bella studentesa
La testa tuttavia immobile
Volta le pagine

Piazza maggiore
The tourists all in their beds.
Polished stone.

For the nihilist poet:

The flesh of saints
And the gravedigger's dung
Covered by earth.

In a country bed
Fed on coney in olive sauce
Dreams of old flames

Far from the Roman ruins

The chestnuts still ground to flour
In the Lunigiana

Angels and devils
Bracketing villagers' souls
On church façades

Della, della forcina
La strada, strada alla Prota
Della, della graffetta

The edge of flu?
The breadknife fixed in hand
Whole wheat or white?

The marchesa asks
Did Shakespeare write his plays?
Last of her ancestors

Ugo Bassi
His fierce arm pointing still
O pedestrians

Arms extended
Around plates of steaming pasta
Mandorla of desire

The portal, the hall
The staircase with maidens in stone
Then many voices

Accursio at dawn
Menganti's pope still blessing
Fresh graffiti

Terribilia
Empty stairwells, cisterns
Haunted by a name

Darker still
The Farini's shops alight
First drops of rain

Punctuated rain
Arcade—street—arcade
The broken centre line

The rare book . . .splayed
Its readers speaking . . .courteously
Till they were . . .missed.

The glossatori
Justly reposing in the margins
their churchyards

In the Piazza Carducci
Their heads bowed, the pigeons
Peck at crumbs

The noisy garden
When no one else is home
The flowers flowering

The towers of Bologna
Making the crooked straight
Sancho and the Don

Banco fidato
Geminiano e Prospero
Santo cielo!

Girasole
Nontiscordadimé
Incostante

Brisk-stepping mother
Where sidewalks cross
Her running child

Tuttora insieme

Fragola, stracciatella

Mamma e figlia

Still and moving

Pansies and sunflowers

To the same star

When the rooks shelter

From the sound of scraping leaves

The dead of night

Their koans unsolved

Their streams no longer sounding

As the winds applaud

A plane to the East

Admitted by the clouds

On Sunday morning

From a bed in Bologna

The whole of the southern sky

The blackbirds' way

This time panettone

To thoughts of the green Pacific

Scattered crumbs

Arm at her throat

Pulled backwards from the hips

In a bakery, kissed

Her cell-phone, Bach

Her head a pleasant air

With earrings

Municipal theatre

From its windows Pavarotti

To Caedmon's bird

A wraith in coffee
A site on the breakfast map
Saint Michael in the Woods

Pious Aldini
Made round yon virgin's shrine
His dining room

Carducci's bust
In his aula of forty-three years
Now bronze, now plaster

Brother Banchieri
From your cell to the organ loft
These winding stairs

Amazing eyes
Saccad the Via Lame
From a perfect face

In a catacomb
On her right side, slightly bent,
Cecilia, a saint

High-heeled shoes
Si prega, silenzio
The iron stairs

Two dogs on a chain
Tangled around their legs
Their owners shouting

Guido Reni
Before the shops moved in
Died here

Carracci in a bank
Suckling, the founders of Rome,
On she-wolf's milk.

Portico palazzo
The passage, the grill, the garden.
Inferno, paradiso

Refrigerator love
Compressing heat from cold
Eroto baked Alaska

Neptune stands guard
The future of socialist Europe
Kids painting for Halloween

Along the porticos
The scooters row on row
Like horses in a western

Still hanging clothes
A far-off flash of lightening
White apron.

In piazza Carducci
The ubiquitous pigeons.
The gray sky.

Caffè déjà vu
On the street of blacksmiths
Just at rifle way

A rose is a rose
In lustrous polymers
So white, so green.

Seeing polaroid
The colour of plastic rose
In the rain.

Imported from China,
Fuchsias, lilies, roses
Balconies high.

Umberto p(r)esante
Già coronata, di (n)uovo
L'uomo grande, e(c)co!

Waiting for an Early Visitor



Photo: Sue Matheson

Allen Berry

DECONSTRUCTION

You want to construct
the perfect suicide.

There are as many methods
as there are people, and as yet
no one has ever pulled one off

with the correct amount of
style, panache, and that most
difficult of quantities...
grace.

After you burn your ear

in the kitchen, imitating
Sylvia Plath, the hose
slips out your driver's side
window, you awaken with
a headache, the volume of
Anne Sexton open on your lap.

You consider pitching forward
into the moon like Li Po.
Now there was a poetic ending.
Face first into the water reaching
for the unreachable.

But what if you don't drink?
or own a boat?
Hm.

The absence of a gun is troublesome,

an inconvenience really,
missing is the heft of oily steel mechanism
sure and swift transportation to
“the undiscovered country from whose
borne...” you know the rest.

But those are messy.
There is no style in a self-painted
Thanatopsis someone else
will have to clean up.

This is supposed to be poetic.
It's supposed to mean something,
to make the world split open and
everyone take notice,
think for a moment: “wow, that was art.”

They're supposed to join hands
and sing Kum By Ya for that matter.
You realize it's all bunk.

It's none of that. It's just you
looking at the wreck of your narrow little dream
getting what you ordered out of life and
wanting to send it back to the kitchen.
Argue with the chef, the maître de, but
not the bartender. NEVER the bartender.

Oh, Li Po,
the bartender was your friend, wasn't he?
Your willing co-conspirator.
“A little more rice wine for the journey?
Sure, why not? Lovely moon out
You should see it...”

I wonder if Hart Crane knew,
skipping off the Lido Deck
into the Gulf of Mexico
drunk on wine and rejection,
that it was a poetic tradition
he was joining?

And what about Berryman
off the Washington Bridge?
Minnesota's too far away...
there's not much beautiful
about being a sot, and
it's almost time for happy hour.
Anyway, and you shouldn't
keep your co-conspirators waiting.

GIRL ON A BENCH

Somewhere—not here—
There is a red-haired girl
on a park bench

with a laugh like wind chimes
ducks at her feet
verdant green grass.

In the air is Calliope music,
although maybe that's
superfluous.

Anyway, what I want
you to know.

What I want you

to take away is:

there is a girl

on a bench

and she has red hair

and sounds like a Calliope

and she is very, very,

far away from here.

And mostly,

that place

is a lot better.

TRICK OF THE LIGHT

After ten years of marriage

she turned out to be

just a trick of the light.

With a sigh and a

“Well. That’s that,”

he went about his chores.

Some offered sympathy,

secretly shaking their heads,

proud of their clear vision.

Others thought they knew

the cure for his broken illusion.

He was, after all, quite eligible.

Despite the efforts
of married friends, he seemed
quite happy in his bachelorhood.

Spent long evenings at the cafe,
having never learned
to cook for himself.

Or playing checkers
with the old men
on the courthouse lawn.

Still...
at home on winter nights
when shadows grew long

he'd light lanterns in corners

hoping to re-capture,
if only for a moment,
his lost phantasmagoria.

CAFFEINE NATION

A caffeine nation, born after sundown,
Skulking across the arc-light landscapes.
The insomniac parliament, shoaling for
cigarettes and waffles, holding court
in all night diners; we will create a
a new world, hidden from the oppressive sun.
Give us the slow mournful nightingale's call
for a national anthem.
Give us a streetlight illuminated landscape,
a jazz tinged, Coltrane carpeted world.

SQUATTING

The Meek shall inherit the earth someday.
Chances are, though, they'll be too timid
to take it.

So here we'll all be,
Squatters,
and the landlords
will be too shy to
pick up the rent.

LINGUISTICS

Because he couldn't
make them understand
peace,

the gentle man
learned to speak
violence fluently,

just in case
a conversation
broke out.

Separation Tango

As in Buenos Aires,
so it is here.

The only way to get close
to a woman is the dance.

Salida.

Pull the emptiness close

Press it to you, and step

Back, back, and pause.

Remember the outline

Of her face, the softness

Of her cheek.

and Hamaca,

Slide, step, step, step.

Side step, back, back,
Every memory again
her almost warmth, almost
presence in the room.
The whole of the dance floor
recalls the geography you covered.

And Ocho al Frente.
Turn, walk back, and back,
she twists left then right,

turning in your arms,
in your memory,
each moment as it
advances and recedes.

Lunge, Ochos, to Gancho.
As you hold her memory to you

turn and turn and hook
the gnawing hunger for her
that will recede but never fade:
these moments like barbs
as fine details fall away.

And Molinette, Windmill.
Even sleep will not provide respite
turning and turning, in the smallest hours
dreams of loss, separation, all just
movements of the dance
as her memory turns and turns around you.

NO WAITRESS EVER BROKE MY HEART

She fills my glass for the fifth time,
then leaves the pitcher with a smile.
She asks me if I saved room for desert,
calls me 'Sugar.'

I go into a beautiful daydream
where her nail polish shade,
"I'm not really a waitress"
rings true, but she still brings
me things, and calls me "sweetie."

This has happened every time since
the first one, who called me "punkin"
made a smiley face with syrup
on my pancakes. I think I was six.
Except for a few Ukrainians at Opryland

Hotel, and Warren Zevon lyrics, none
of them have been with the Russians.

It's the perfect relationship,
the uncomplicated one, where
she doesn't have to know about
my raging insecurities, and I don't
have to know about her broken dreams.
A guilt free, cash based, love affair
that gets refilled every time I come back,
as long as she's on shift, anyway.
a love affair for the course of a meal,
then I slip off to my miseries and she
to the other sad sacks, sore feet, bad tips.

WHAT WAS LOST

And then came the point
in the conversation
when something was lost.
Perhaps it was mislaid somewhere
in the inside jokes
of Elevator Operators,
or in Phoenician Graffiti.
We lost the very idea of it.
In the time when we came to understand,
it scabbed over like a pearl
in time we forgot all we'd ever known.
By the time we finished the coffee
and went our separate ways,
we left without the knowledge
there had been anything at all.

Broken

Sometimes it's a drink,
sometimes it's a woman.
This time it was you, darling.

A rescuer to bind my wounds,
Belphoebe to my Timias,
with about as much luck.

We were both a little broken
trying to salve the hurts
with words, thinking panacea

but they keep coming open
again. Sliced on a shard
of memory. Sometimes

we scratch the scabs to feel
the intensity of the wounding
one more time; the one who cut us.

We wonder at a permanent fix.
A splint we'll unwrap in time,
ponder pale flesh, thinner limb.

In the end,
I just wasn't
broken enough

for you to love.

So you never noticed
I needed you to save me.

REACTION

Because the rain fell
at just the right angle,
because the earth
was slightly warmer
than in past decades

Because a butterfly
beat its wings, causing
a woman in Utah
to ponder a question
she shouldn't have.

Because it was Tuesday

and because I somehow
always screw up Tuesdays,

a promise was broken
something irreplaceable

was lost.

Pisew

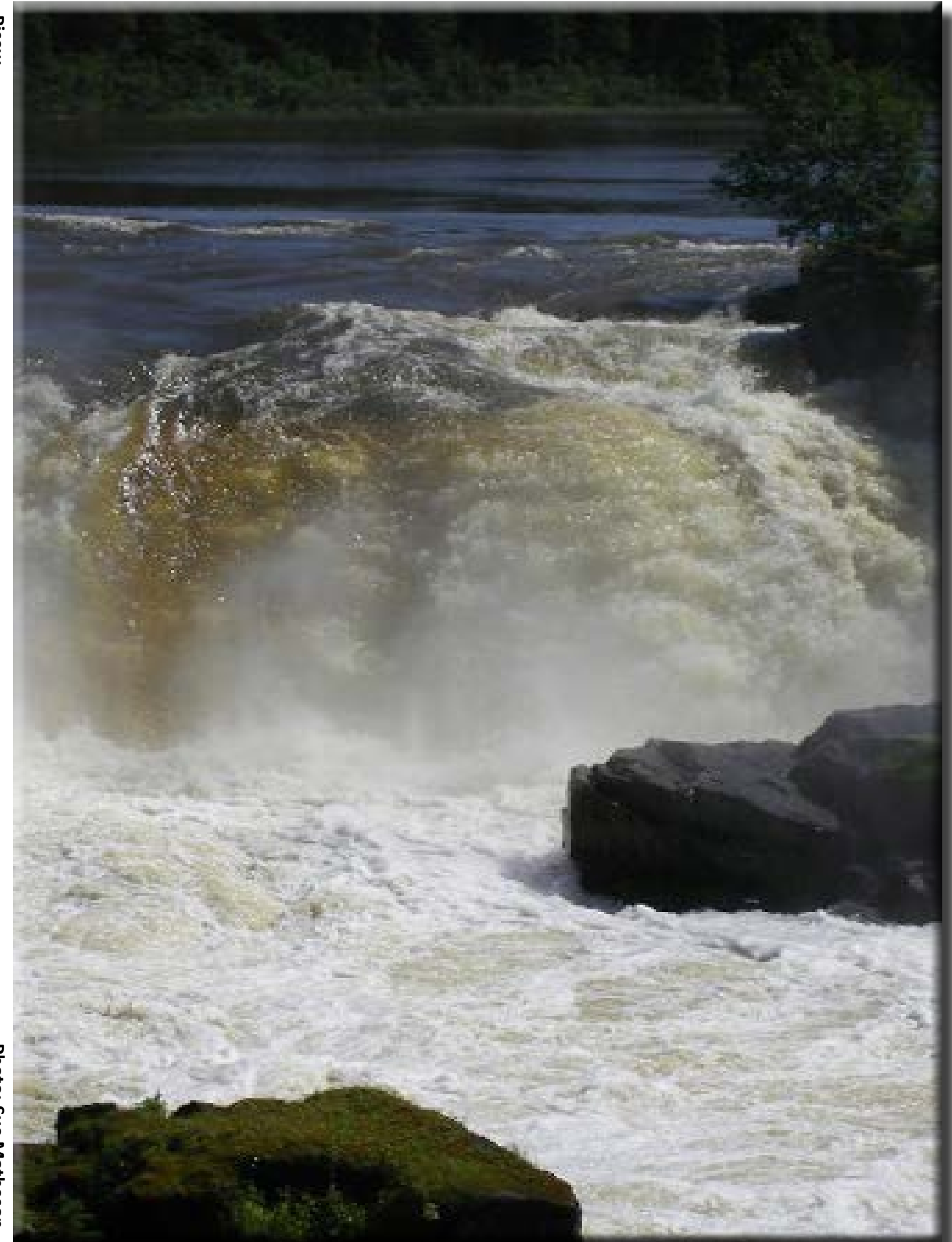


Photo: Sue Matheson

bill bissett

th tiny librarians

in our heds oft n dont
know how 2 file sum things n ths cud b wun uv thos times
th itches uv witche whethr whatevr male or female th
hiddn switches uv witches evn tho they ar oft n gud n othrs
who oft n bhve sew badlee contain like all seeds uv
destruksyun a hi degree uv unprediktabilitee is uv kours
2 ther victims uv theyr bad behaviour whn theyr gud theyr
veree veree gud is uv kours 2 theyr victims th wuns they
violate lerning strange n unhappee cares 4 life oft n th suddn turns
on wun unprediktabl distr uv kouirs without warning me n sistr
barb on th xcellent road trip 4 dayze a wun drful journee went 2
see her a brillyant video vizual artist archivist n veree xcellent
frend

who ar witches or wizrads peopul who can thru seizr up
endorphin or elastisitee bbbbbunchd up nervs on a towr
or mid glide

uv theyr mind switches tarnis burnish up fast turrets
n tunnuls brain change neurologika

sum unseen brain idea accenting in theyr minds who ar
usd 2 having sway in2 or ovr othr peopul or events n can b
part uv making magik happn 4 heeling timez evn tho maybe
it can happn noun gaps verbs missing advedrbd reluctant
2 reelee take part duz it mattr all that much they can hurt
in theyr possessiv rages n kontrolling tho thats not reelee
th topik heers an xampul

as i sd me n sistr barb wer droppin in on wun uv thm
th glowneek wun me n her have workd a lot 2gethr ovr
30 yeers we have a lot uv his her storee 2gethr enerjeez

outside th main streem yes bluberree pancakes she n her

tall son in th close quartrs kitchn arguing jokularlee ths n
that back n 4th i knew sumthing was eskalating i didnt
know what she had sd th day b4 that paranoia had
such a bad rap it was reelee great par xample hitchcock
detektiv storeez great dramas wasint paranoia th basis
uv sew much great art th bluberee pancakes wer amazing
thn as that day b4 i had politelee refusd a hair cut alredee
from her she was she was wildlee giving me an ipod n as
she was adjusting th hed set n th phone n i sd NO

agen looking imploringlee at my sistr barb 2 dew sumthing
who was going in2 trauma shock as th witchd grabbd a
giant pair uiv scissors cud sistr barb stop ths hair carnage
n almost noislesslee in 2 fell swoops cut all my hair off
hacking large chunks it had bin veree long NO NO i sd stop
with all ths samson n deliah stuff my sistr barb lookd sew
shockd she cud not moov n th witch put my hair in th cup
uv her palms n blew blew in2 it n stuffd she did all th hair
she had cut in2 a shrine sum kind uv sistr barb sd aftr ther wer

266 uv my favorit jazz artists inklewding sarah vaughan my all
time favorit n evreewun th witch put in th ipod 4 me its not
as if she didnt have love in her heart in is wundrful shes
cruel 2 most uv my frends its just th word consensual
dusint meen that much 2 her sew i sd 2 sistr barb n looking
at my watch we best get along we want 2 b in kamloops in
a few hours n thn latr salmon arm 4 th nite yes n we ragd out
th door backwards th west is wild but not b4 we didnt get out
yet b4 th witch jumpd up n stradduld me n got in2 wet kissing
firm lushyus

she saying eye love yu eye love yu ovr n ovr agen n me
saying i love yu back n keeping my eye on th huge scissors

n 2 b honourabul getting in2 sum major lip acksyun in return

i nevr wud have wrestuld her out uv her intendid trans th

scissoprs wer HUGE i didnt want her or sistr barb or her
tall son or me 2 get hurt

a top therapist in calgaria sd 2 me bill yu cant go back 2
that place 2 evr visit dew yu undrtstand she violatid yu yes uv kours
sirtinlee unprediktabul

who cud have 4told that event it dusint make me skard 2 go out
onlee sumtimez or apprehensiv whatevr it was n i left like lite hedid
releevd had th worst happend whatevr it was it looks awful

aneeway th huge unsirtintee unmamtintee in all our lives
th qwestyuns uv th answr n th qwestyuns uv th hopes

THER IS NOTHING 2 CATCH UP 2 th strange n suddn feers
not evr rashyunal WHATS RASHYUNAL yu ask agen n agen n
agen anee answr is asking what dew yu reelee hold sew firm in
yr hands

she sleeps with my hair btween her legs at nite
shes a great artist n also veree poor thees qwestyuns
what is sirtin

ths nu day yr life
yr komunikasyun abiliteez

yr a - b goal konsconsciousness

yr love s is that all sirtin

eye remembr th doktor whos name we cant say how he tried 2
rape me threw me down i rose up n i held him down made him listn

2 danny kaye sew brilllyant in th kastul moovee th pistol is in
that pestul is in th pestral in th flagon is in th dragon in th kastul
no its bin changd now th flagon is in th dragon in th kastul n he
almost apologizd n i onlee wuns or twice saw him agen aftr a few
mor insidents uv his xtrem verbal abuse tho ther had bin a long
time b4 ths whn evreething was sew great

sumthing unprediktabul can happn n create sumthing prediktabul
she sleeps with my hair btwwen her legs at nite

th topik n uv th tropiks optiks hows it look lets have a look see
we may have 2 opn th eye go deep inside can we change sum
wun elsus behaviours theyr toxiteez with each insident like ths
thers a point wher we cannot partisipate in our our violaysyun

aneemor

he drinks koold aid sweet 2 th day th color 2nite maroon
or green iul take green i sd sucking away in th half
dark hes a guitar in th moonlite

she sleep with my hair btween her legs at nite oh th

tiny librarians how dew we file all ths they sighd in a flurree
rushing abt wundr what hedding prais th tiny librarians
who can heer our skripts with them we can navigate thru

teers at th heart all encased in boxes at nite sleeping like

vampires nu day 4gottn 2 dayze rememberd

d r e e m s

wun word no dr obvious wuns wer missing know its
lessr dreems whers anee hierarkess uv othrs espeshulee
all ok feeling that hat n endlesslee

wundring dr mees eems sr deem meed rs eemlesslee en

we seem 2 us how we see things what ten

whats best dr eems seems

dew yu heer th echo uv wher yuv bin

ar yu captivatid or entanguld by its

sounds its memoreez its manee

langwages smells time senses ths

is alwayze now bettr 2 keep going if

yu can they all say make art out uv th

echos relees thos entising siren voices

n th fresh countree air kleen watr treez

ther is no echo 2 go back 2 maybe ther is

no back 2 yet i cum up on th hi green

hill agen north coverd ths time in snow

n watch th sunset from th porch not

remembring th chattring attachmentz n

care 4 ths dwelling place uv wood n dreems

as th moon slides in2 th ocean places wher

yu ar down south on th coast all th stars

in th world reflektid in th watrs neer yu

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n submerg vankouvr bc nu york citee

n prins edward island representing what

a nu definishyun uv watr front or as top

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long undrstood transisyun is th reel main

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thers a deep insecuritee

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ther is love

tho not alwayze

Easter Sunday

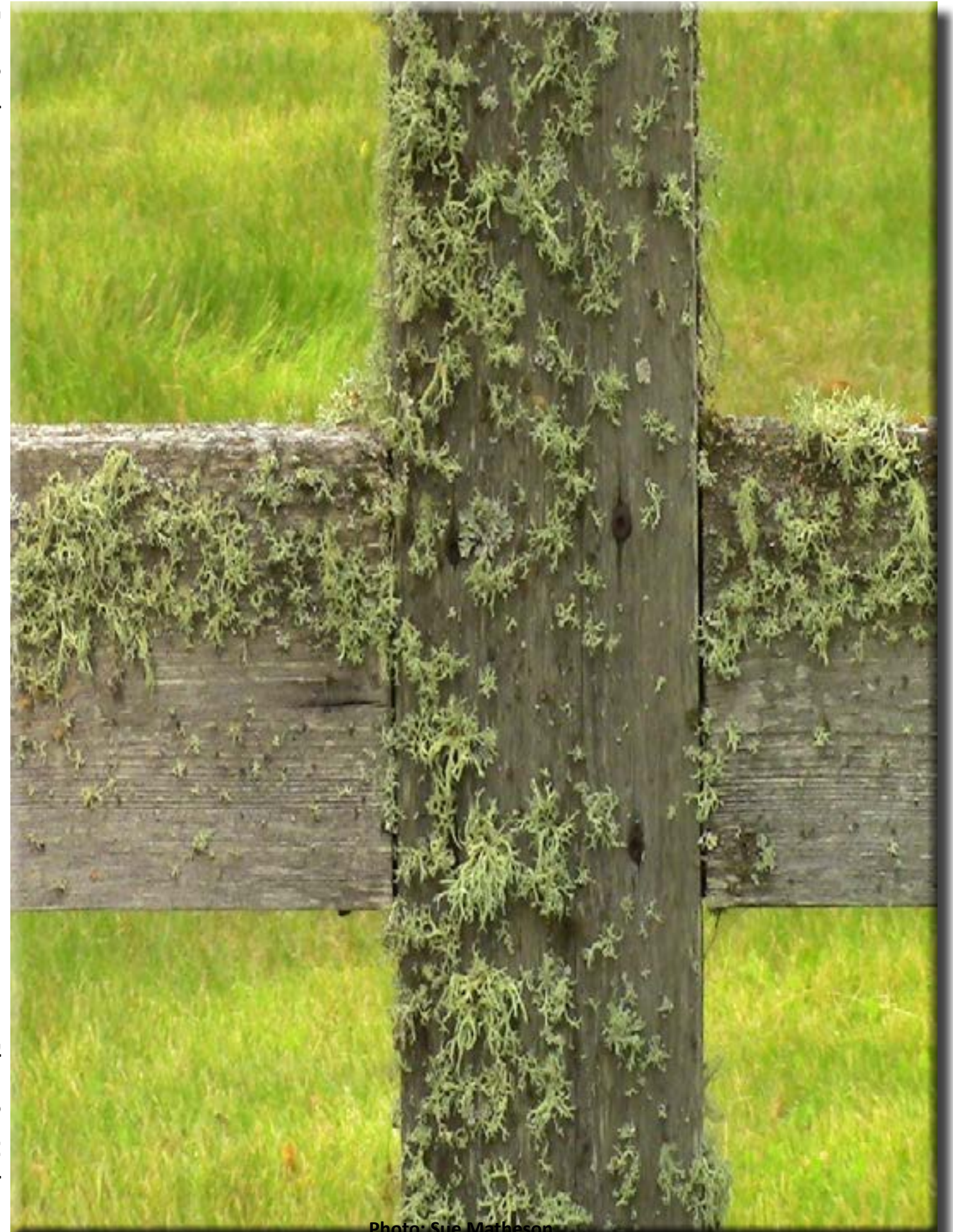


Photo: Sue Matheson

Photo: Sue Matheson

Debbie Cutshaw

Shakespeare's Shoes

Henry Condell knew he should not have stayed late at the pub. Or had that last drink. Then, he wouldn't have been robbed, he thought, as he felt the wound on his head. Elizabeth must be worried! He shakily stood up, and walked to lighted buildings on a small gray road. Sitting on a concrete bench, he checked himself. He had his gold ring, but no money. Suddenly, water sprayed. When Henry heard its noise, he ran to another bench, further away and sat down again. Turning his head, he saw a newspaper stand. Fascinated, Henry read: "O-re-gone, June 23, 1999, and rubbed his eyes. The moonless sky was frightening and gave no answer. Henry stood up, sat down, closed his eyes, and looked again. The date remained. "This must be a dream." Henry said out loud, just wanting to hear something familiar. He pinched his right arm; nothing changed. He poked his chest, and thought it must have been bad Left Leg beer. He thought back. Jack and Ben went out together. I left later. The

rain had eased, but I saw three men. Now I'm here. Where is here—Venus? Henry asked himself, noticing more un-London things: a green plastic trash can chained to a lamppost, large concrete sidewalks, manicured lawns, and a white and orange container that read Fed- Ex. He looked across to a shop sign, Tudor Guild Gifts, and walked towards it. It was closed. Nearby was a door that said Hemming's Travel Agency, Ashland, (541) 555-1616. Although it wasn't spelled the same as his friend, Jack's name, seeing it brought him some comfort although the room was vacant. 1616 was good, but the other numbers puzzled him. Henry heard voices and then saw a man and woman walking. Quickly, he hid behind the green dumpster in the alley. The woman spoke first: "Why did we have to wait until midnight to eat? The only thing open then is McDonalds and you know I can't eat Big Macs. I asked for a fish sandwich. You always forget that I'm a beginning vegetarian. I can't eat this."

"Well, then leave it on the bench for the birds— gulls will eat the bread," the man said.

She placed the open Big Mac sandwich carton on the bench. Henry saw their pace quicken, and could no longer hear them talking. He could smell the meat, and remembered he had eaten mutton for dinner long ago. The man said bread. He looked at the open carton, and saw the bread first, and leaned in for a whiff. It felt oily and

warm. Hunger and curiosity distracted him from even thinking the food was unsafe. Maybe eating it will help me think, Henry rationalized to himself while taking a bite. It surprised him how tasty it was. He chewed slowly this time, and then swallowed. Nothing happened. A bigger bite; still nothing, so he gobbled the rest and smelled his hands. He liked the odor, and now had a plan. He would remain sitting until the Travel Agency Shop opened and inquire about passage to London. Elizabeth will be so worried; he sighed as he lay down on the bench and dozed off.

Sunrise woke him, but it was still quiet in the courtyard. He wet his face with water from a nearby puddle. 23 June, 1999, the paper said. He had lost two days and gained over 300 years, but he still didn't believe it. A young woman with long, dark hair, dressed in a black skirt and boots approached the door and unlocked it. Upon entering, she noticed Henry who smiled at her. Deirdre was glad she had locked the door until the man knocked on it. "Sorry, sir, we're closed—it's Sunday."

"Madame, I desperately need to return to London. Please—I was robbed."

Deirdre knew that something was not right about the man, and wondered why she wasn't afraid of him. "I can call the police for you." Noticing his outfit, "Did you get robbed after a rehearsal?"

"Yes, and then after a drink, but I did not see who robbed me. Please assist me;

my wife will be worried."

Deirdre decided to take a chance. She would stand by the alarm system by the light switch. And Starbucks was open; someone would hear a commotion. At least he looked over forty and not seedy. And, he was dressed in stage clothes; a doublet and long sleeved white shirt with brown pants and boots. She unlocked the door. "Please sit down. I'd offer you coffee, but we're not technically open. You need to get to London right away?"

"Yes." Henry looked around, distracted by the lime green metal cabinets and matching cloth chairs. Deirdre noticed him staring at the Shakespeare Festival posters on the wall behind her. "Are you auditioning for a play? I act also, but just have an extra part this season."

Henry played along: "Yes, I am auditioning for Macduff in Macbeth, and will double another part of course." He picked it because that play had not opened yet. "Also, Earl of Kent in King Lear. Not good enough for important parts, as my mates often remind me." Henry smiled; glad to be talking about something familiar.

Deirdre thought his accent sounded legitimate. "How soon must you be in London?"

"As soon as possible," he answered.

“Your auditions won’t interfere?” He shook his head no, realizing that his audition story did not match then. Deirdre turned on her computer, but then waited by the alarm switch. She noticed his head wound when he scratched his head. “May I ask if you saw a doctor after you were robbed?”

“Oh, no. I didn’t see the ruffians’ faces. I am more worried about my wife not knowing where I am, you see.”

“I see, “ said Deirdre, wanting to trust him. She sat down. “British Air has the best rate. I can book you for tomorrow night, 9PM, flying out of Portland. So I can either book you a puddle jumper to there, or I can help you with a car rental. Which will it be?”

Henry’s brain stopped processing her words after hearing flying out of Portland. Flying out must mean traveling, he thought. But where was Portland? Obviously near water, he decided. Deirdre noticed his blank look. “Are you ok, Mister---?”

Henry apologetically stood up and replied: “Henry Condell, my pleasure, Miss Hemmings.” He didn’t know whether to shake her hand or kiss it. She had no gloves on, so he bowed slightly. Immediately, Deirdre laughed: “I get it—Mister CONDELL. This is a great joke. I remember—Hemengs and Condell. Who put you up to it—Lisa? And your clothes and makeup—that head injury stuff is great.”

Henry hadn’t felt like crying since he was a boy, and his face showed it. He gazed at the Shakespeare poster to compose himself. Deirdre did not fail to notice his eyes tearing up. “Mr. Condell, if you’re not part of a joke from my friends, please reassure me that you’re not crazy or worse, a criminal. I will gladly take you to a Doctor or the police for help.”

Henry sighed. “Miss Hemmings, I was indeed robbed after my friends left me at the public house. All I remember is seeing three men outside, then some thunder and lighting, and then waking up here. And, it is even more horrible--I not only live in another place, I live in-- another time. These clothes are mine. Although I am an actor, I am also a businessman. A very frightened businessman who desperately wants to return home. If this is a bad dream, I am not awakening. I miss my wife. Please help me.”

Deirdre played with her business cards, betting that he had to be from an asylum and sympathetically played along. “Mr. Condell, what time are you from—when was it you were drinking? And, were you drinking a lot?”

“Friday, 21 June, 1616. I was very drunk when my friends left. I was upset about my friend, Will’s recent death; so were they, but they-.”

“Will Shakespeare?” Deirdre couldn’t believe she asked him.

“Yes, how did you know?”

“I’m an Anglophile—1616 was the clue—and you said Will. What day did he die, and from what?” Deirdre already knew the answer.

“Thursday, the 23rd of April. Ben said that he had had a cough and a fever; mind you, not the Black Death. Never recovered in a fortnight.”

“Your friends’ names?”

“Ben Jonson and Jack Hemmings. That’s why I knocked on your door—same last name—E. Deirdre Hemmings.”

“However spelled differently; but of course, your time had no spelling consistency.”

Henry looked puzzled. “You are E. Deirdre?”

“Yes—E for Elizabeth.”

“My wife’s name is Elizabeth.” Henry wanted to cry again, but bit the inside of his lip, and tightly grasped his shirt cuffs. Deirdre jumped up. “Look, Mr. Condell. I’m starving and am in great need of coffee. Would you like something to eat? A scone and coffee or tea? You can walk with me around the corner or stay here. I suggest you stay here.”

Henry nodded. “That would be lovely.” Deirdre closed the door, figuring he’d

be gone when she returned, but he wasn’t. She placed two Starbuck coffees and maple oat nut scones on her desk. He perked up when she entered. “The food aromas here are delicious,” he said.

“Eat something—you’ll feel better.” Deirdre didn’t mention that she had left her friend, Lisa, a voice mail summarizing the situation and to call her soon. She wanted to quiz him more. “So, Shakespeare didn’t die of the plague—er black death?”

“No, he was lucky. His son, Hamnet, had died of that, but Will was still in London at the time. He received the news three days later. The boy was only eleven; Will lost himself in work—wrote voraciously.”

“So, he called his play, Hamlet, after his son who died?”

“Oh no, that was an Old Norse folktale-Amleth-- idea he borrowed. His son was named after his neighbor—same neighbors who had named their son, William.”

“What was his wife’s name?”

“Anne Hathaway.”

“His mother?”

“Mary Arden.”

“Father’s occupation?”

“John Shakespeare was a glover, a brogger, and an Alderman.”

“Was Shakespeare Catholic or Protestant?”

“Officially Church of England, but of course given last rites, but really followed no religion after Hamnet died. Didn’t even return often to Stratford.”

Deirdre was glad he had answered her questions correctly. Henry examined the paper cup and took a bigger swallow. He was glad that they had eaten the same food, wondering if poisoned food was part of this place or dream. “May I ask Miss Hemmings, what did I just eat and drink?”

“A maple oat nut scone and a bold Starbucks Grande coffee with cream.”

Henry smiled. “The Scots eat oats, but only English horses do. Very tasty.”

Deirdre laughed. At least it wasn’t her usual boring Sunday. The phone rang. It was Lisa. “Oh, hi. Yeah, I’m fine. Thought you were playing a joke on me. You know—Hemmings and Condell, the first folio. Dressed for the part. A folio is bigger than a quarto, Lisa. Don’t you remember anything from Renaissance lit? OK, later.”

“Miss Hemmings, do you have folios and quartos here?”

“Oh no, not unless I find a million bucks in this file cabinet.” She saw his quizzical look. “I’ll explain later.” Deirdre did not want to bring up the year 1616 again. “Mr. Condell, getting to London is about twelve hours by plane from here, and you do not look in any shape to travel. My suggestion—get you to a Doctor, then

rest, then discuss. Who knows? Maybe, you’ll wake up from your bad dream by that time.”

Henry agreed.

“Good. I’ll drive you to the hospital; my car is around the corner.” Henry was reluctant to leave his new comfort zone, but he followed her to a tan VW convertible. She leaned over and buckled him in, glad she had the top down for screaming purposes if needed. Henry’s stomach jolted when the car moved; he was too nauseous to talk. “You’ve never rode in a VW?” He shook his head no. Deirdre felt guilty that she hadn’t explained the car ride, but she still didn’t totally believe him. While helping him out of the car at the hospital, he collapsed outside the emergency entrance and was immediately rolled in on a gurney. Deirdre filled out paperwork, guessing at his age and other information while the Doctor examined him. She listed herself as emergency contact—friend. It was an hour before Doctor Howard spoke to her. She blurted out: “Doctor, he’s from England.”

“Well, he doesn’t need stitches, but he was given a tetanus shot. Nasty concussion. He’s awake now—asked about you. Vomited his food. I recommend bed rest. Here’s a prescription for the nausea, if needed. He appears exhausted—bad case of jet lag and a touch of the common cold virus. No temperature. Have him drink plenty of

fluids. Call me, or bring him back if he gets worse.”

Deirdre nodded and opened Henry’s curtained partition. He was relieved to see her. “I believe the prior big MacDonald I ate made me sick, Miss Hemmings. The maple oat nut scone you gave me was delicious.”

“Perhaps your 17th century stomach can’t deal with 20th century food. Remind me not to give you Pepsi. How did you get a Big Mac?”

“A lady left it on the bench in the park near your shop.”

Deirdre was amazed that she was starting to believe his story. Maybe I’m the one dreaming all this, she thought. After all, I didn’t drink enough coffee yet. “Let’s go, Mr. Condell. I’ll drive slowly. Cars are like horseless carriages; they take you wherever-- quickly. Tell me if you feel sick, and close your eyes if it helps.”

“Are we driving to London?”

“No, that would take four days and a ship and—we are going to my house where you can sleep. Doctor’s orders.”

Henry sat still with his hands on his lap, clutching his hospital paperwork tighter when he thought another car would hit them. After parking, they walked upstairs to her apartment.

“Are your parents at home, Miss Hemmings?”

“I live alone. My dad owns a hotel, but the doctor said to keep an eye on you, so here we are.” There were three posters of London on the walls and two book shelves. The tan carpet and brown hounds tooth cloth texture of the furniture was relaxing to Henry, and the dim lights dulled his senses until a gray cat jumped in front of them. “Marlowe, get out of here!” Henry wondered if she had known Kit Marlowe. He was suddenly embarrassed: “Miss Hemmings, I cannot stay alone with an unmarried woman.”

“Don’t worry, I’ve brought up other—“ She stopped. Everything was complicated enough. “There are two bedrooms; you stay there—the bathroom is between. If you’re thirsty, bottles of water in the fridge.” She opened the door. “Any questions?”

“Yes, where’s the chamber pot?”

Deirdre thought he’s too good or too loony, as she led him to the bathroom. “Go in there, then press this lever and it goes away!”

“Sir John Harington built something like this for Queen Elizabeth in 1596—I never saw it, just heard about it. Marvelous.” Deirdre made a mental note to check that fact. “Don’t go anywhere. I ‘ll be back with your medicine.” She wished now that she had asked the Doctor to have a psychologist examine him. She would hurry.

Henry had flushed the toilet ten times before the phone ring made him stop. He looked around when a female voice, not Deirdre's, started talking: "Hi, just checking to make sure your throat's not slit. Call me soon, or I'll be over with my Uzi." Henry was troubled. Of course, Miss Hemmings would think he was a criminal. If some filthy beggar had approached him with a story like his—well, he would have kept on walking. Henry hugged himself while pacing by the bookshelf, reading the titles: *The Prince*, *Montaigne's Essays*, *Richard Hakluyt's Voyages and Discoveries*, *Dr. Faustus*, *Utopia*, *Poems of Michelangelo*. The books were so small and delicate; he didn't want to touch them. As he sat on the sofa, Deirdre entered. "I got medicine and dinner; figured Chinese would be easiest on your stomach."

Got must mean have, Henry thought. "Oh it smells exotic," he said, trying to see inside the bags.

"Medicine first, so you won't throw up."

Henry hesitated.

"It's all legal—label from Dr. Howard, with today's date—better not look at dates," Deirdre said. Henry swallowed a spoonful, hoping that if he didn't die, the dream would end.

"Did anyone call?"

"No one knocked," he dutifully answered.

"I mean—did the phone ring?"

"There was ringing and a woman's voice spoke."

"Probably Lisa." She went to her bedroom, and pushed the button on the answering machine by her bed, and then dialed Lisa. "Yes, still here. Has a concussion and upset stomach. I was getting his prescription. Lisa, he heard your message," she whispered. "The poor guy's a wreck; worse than a nine year old at a new school. I haven't told my dad since he doesn't trust me with men since the divorce. Come on over, I got us take-out." She sat down across from Henry by the bookcase. "I'm sorry you heard my friend, Lisa. She was joking. If I thought you were dangerous I would have already called the police—had you arrested." Henry nodded and watched her put on the kettle and set the kitchen table. Deirdre truly wished to help him, but wanted more that he not be crazy. Let Lisa keep checking for escapes from mental institutions, she thought. Henry ate slowly this time. First soup, then little bites of rice and chicken. His full stomach and the chamomile tea were making him sleepy, so he leaned his head on his closed left fist. Deirdre poured him more tea. "Here's your fortune cookie. Maybe a message from beyond!"

She dramatically broke hers and read aloud: "An old friend will re-enter your

life. May I?” Henry gave her his cookie. “You will be taking a trip soon. Pretty accurate, huh?”

Henry nodded sleepily, and let Deirdre lead him to his bedroom. She helped him remove his boots, and then covered him with a blanket when he stretched out on top of the bedspread. He fell asleep immediately.

Lisa knocked instead of ringing the doorbell. She had even worn her black trench coat, excited to be investigating, although she didn’t think Deirdre’s information on Henry was accurate. Probably some old wino pulling her leg, and just wanting money. But Deirdre’s bad luck with men worried her. After her ex had stolen her car, she only drove manuals now. Weird. Deirdre opened the door, holding two fingers to her lips. Lisa whispered: “Where is he?”

“In there sleeping.”

“Can I look?” Deirdre shrugged, and motioned her to the bedroom. Looking down, Lisa mouthed to her: “He’s cute.” Deirdre rolled her eyes. Closing the door, they sat down at the kitchen table. Deirdre opened a bottle of chardonnay. “Henry Condell’s still his name? He doesn’t look much older than 45.” Lisa said. “Yeah—that’s why I thought you were playing a joke—remember Hemmings and Condell published Shakespeare’s First Folio in 1623 after he died in 1616.”

“Like I remember anything from that Renaissance lit class—I cut it a lot, but liked reading Machiavelli’s *The Prince*—reminded me of Clinton.”

“Bill or Hilary?”

“Both.” They laughed. Lisa continued. “There are no missing person reports with that name and description, approximate age, in the Oregon-Washington area. Is there a Plan B? My ex-boyfriend, the cop, loves doing favors for me.”

“I guess check the entire USA and Great Britain. Any ideas, Lisa?” Deirdre asked.

“Well, I never read *The Time Machine* in school, but I did see the movie on television. Then, there was another movie about H.G. Wells time traveling to San Francisco because Jack the Ripper I think stole his time machine and later a girl saves him and Jack gets his, and he returns to London, with the help of the girl, of course.”

“Lisa, there is no time machine involved.”

Lisa finished her glass quickly. “Yeah, just hoping. As my dad, the sleazy lawyer would say, let’s examine facts. What does Henry say?”

“He was drinking heavily with his two friends, Ben Jonson and Jack Hemmings, who went home early. He stayed on in the bar-uh pub, but when he left he remembered seeing three men outside in the rain. He thinks they robbed him; but maybe he got hit

by lightning. He woke up in the park by my office this morning, two days and 383 years later," Deirdre said, looking down at her calculator.

"And you feel safe with this guy? I know he's cute, but—"

"That's the weird thing, Lise; I feel safe around him. Besides, he's married. I'm not interested in him as a date—especially if he's 383 years old. Look what he took out of his pocket. His wife must have embroidered it." Deirdre showed her a meticulously embroidered white handkerchief with the letter, H. "He used it to wipe his mouth after taking his medicine."

"So what's the game plan? You're the British scholar. I suggest you get him rip-roaring drunk or stoned and see what happens. Maybe he's on bad LSD now and has amnesia and we can get some good LSD to counteract it."

"I'll be the adult, here, Lisa. Maybe he's just an ex university professor with a head injury. My thoughts are to get him under hypnosis; perhaps he'll remember or say something."

"That's good. I could try reading his Tarot cards. I took a class once. Or maybe there's some numerology clue. 383; three plus eight plus three equals five. I can't remember what five means in numerology."

"We already know he's in trouble, Lise. Don't need fortune telling."

"Ok, ok, I'll get my ex to check Interpol and you find a hypnotist."

"You might have to sleep with your ex again, Lise."

"All in the line of duty, my dear. Just get more correct ID info. Bill knew I was making a lot up. Just in case he is a cute ax murderer, I'll stay over. No classes tomorrow."

"And I'm calling in sick tomorrow," Deirdre said. "I can't leave him alone."

Henry woke up ten hours later. It was five in the morning and dark. Opening and shutting his eyes several times did not change anything, so he got up. He splashed water on his face and sat on the couch by the bookcase, soon hearing music from Deirdre's clock radio. Dressed in her white terrycloth bathrobe, she yawned hello at him. Henry stood up.

"I'll make us coffee and toast." He followed her and sat at the table, noticing Lisa's trench coat on the chair. "My friend, Lisa, stayed over and we have an idea of how to help you." She pushed in four slices of whole wheat bread into the toaster.

"We think that you should go under hypnosis; you might say something that could help us get you back to family. "

"What is under hypnosis?"

"You would see a Doctor or a professional hypnotist who talks to you and relaxes

you to where you are almost asleep. When the hypnotist questions you, you might not even remember.”

“I am willing to try.” Henry said. He smelled the coffee brewing. “Is there a stag bucks in that pot?” Deirdre laughed and shook her head no. Just then, Lisa entered the kitchen in a hot pink bathrobe. “Hi Henry, glad to meet you. I’m Lisa, Deirdre’s friend.” Henry stood up and smiled, trying not to stare at her spiked short blonde hair. “I heard Deirdre explain the hypnotist stuff to you; don’t worry, it doesn’t hurt.” He sat down again, and sipped the coffee Deirdre placed by him. Lisa added: “I found two names on the computer last night. They’re in Medford. We can all drive there.—One is Dr. Rodrigo Lopez and one is a Dr. John Moore.” Henry looked quite worried.

“After we get him meds for sea sickness; good Mr. Condell?” Deirdre asked.

“You may call me Henry, Miss Hemmings. Are we sailing by wherry?”

“No, pills for car sickness, and call me Deirdre. You all right?”

“I was taken aback by the name—Dr. Roderigo Lopez was a Jewish doctor accused of attempting to poison the Queen. The Earl of Essex helped capture him in 1594 and he was executed. Will formed his idea for Shylock from him. We never thought the chap was guilty though. His last words-- about loving the Queen as he

loved Jesus Christ, made the crowd laugh and see it as more admission of guilt.”

“I could see where that name would get a reaction. Here’s your toast; and butter and jelly.” Henry hungrily ate the toast after he buttered it; Deirdre made more. While she washed the dishes, Henry looked at the bookshelf after Lisa went to shower. “There is no folio of all of Will’s plays.” Henry stated seriously, pointing to the large paperback.

“I’m glad you brought that up,” Deirdre said after drying her hands and pulling the book off the shelf. “You can look at any of my books. Here is the weird thing. After Shakespeare died, his friends published all of his plays in 1623, and we 20th century people continue to identify it as the first folio. Actually, you and Mr. Hemmings were responsible for publishing it. See why I was uh-confused.” Henry looked as if he’d seen a ghost; his own ghost. Deirdre didn’t know what else to say. He barely spoke for the rest of the morning.

Two hours later, they drove to get Henry hypnotized. They stopped at MacDonald’s when Henry got excited seeing the yellow arches. Deirdre ordered them fillet of fish sandwiches and coffee; Lisa ate two big macs and a coke. “I ate a big MacDonald’s meat pie before, Miss Lisa.” Henry boasted. After finishing, they drove to the park by Doctor Moore’s office and waited since they were early. Lisa

went shopping, and returned with blue striped pajamas for Henry. Sitting in the park sunshine eased him. “You’re not scared, I hope.” Lisa said.

“No, glad to be doing something.”

“If this doesn’t work, we’ll keep trying to get you home,” Deirdre added. Henry thanked them as they entered the waiting room. Both girls hugged him when the nurse called his name. After an hour, the same nurse asked Deirdre if she wanted to speak to the Doctor. Deirdre thought that the Doctor looked like an actor playing a doctor. He wouldn’t look her in the eye. “Mr. Condell genuinely believes that he lives in London, and the year is 1616. He has no idea what the United States is about, much less who is President or Governor. He did comment about taxes, King James, and his favorite meal being a big mac. His wife’s name is Elizabeth Smart, whom he married on October 24, 1596. He described Adder Street and his parish in London which I would continue to check for missing person reports. Sometimes another shock to the system can recover memory. I also recommend an MRI. Good luck.”

Their drive back to Ashland was more serious. After dropping Lisa off, Deirdre warmed up leftover meat loaf and potatoes. While Henry poured more burgundy, Deirdre got out the Shakespeare book. “A lot of people don’t believe that he wrote all these plays—because he wasn’t college educated. They think the Earl of Oxford

or Francis Bacon wrote them for the money.” She still wanted to test his knowledge.

“Will was the truest-mannered man,” Henry answered. “He was smart, and could remember everything, and even describe strangers from face to foot. Indeed, he parsed stories and descriptions, and there was no book, such as Holinshed’s, that he did not know of. Francis Bacon is busy revising his essays again. He married a rich woman, and has no need of money from writing. The Earl of Oxford was always too busy courting the ladies; some ladies he wrote poetry for, but Will wrote sonnets also when the theaters were closed. Will did partner with John Fletcher on the play, *Two Noble Kinsmen*, but he indeed wrote all the plays listed in your large book. When younger, he did compete a bit with Kit Marlowe until his murder, but Will’s best work came around the time his son, Hamnet died. Was a changed man. I saw him actually cry when he chanced upon a beggar boy coughing in the street. Will gave him money and stared so long when the boy scampered away.” Deirdre poured wine. “Did you understand what the Doctor recommended?”

He shook his head no.

“MRI’s an expensive medical test for your head. But, we can wait a little.” They talked about the theatre until midnight like old buddies. Deirdre mentioned that she had to work tomorrow for sure, but would be home by tea time, announcing:

“Housekeeping 101. Tea kettle on stove; turn on here. Unplug coffee pot. Lunch in fridge—wrapped; see. Beer in bottle. Chips and dip in cupboard—AND, if you are good, I will bring home a star stag coffee and maple oat nut scone. Now, here are the pjs—uh nightclothes, that Lisa bought. I’ll wash what you have on, and iron in the morning I guess. I’ll show you how to work the bath. Any questions?” She noticed him squinting.

“Could you make it less bright in here? Perhaps light one of those candles?” After turning off the lights, Deirdre lit three candles, and then asked him: “I’m dying to know. What was Shakespeare’s favorite play?”

“That’s like asking which child is favorite. Let me think. He enjoyed writing *Merry Wives of Windsor* because the Queen requested it for Garter Feast to celebrate the election of Lord Hunsdon. The Histories—he liked creating a new Richard III from Thomas More’s work. *Lear* was a challenge—thought adding Lear’s madness and the tragic ending made a more stirring play. He was fond of Falstaff in *Henry IV*; especially when the audiences raved.” After finishing the third bottle of wine, Deirdre put on tea and put out leftover apple muffins. Henry ate three almost simultaneously. He started to doze while she was fixing the automatic coffeepot, so she led him to the bathroom, and ran bath water. After handing him pajamas, she closed the door.

Deidre called out to make sure he was all right. Henry had never slept so peacefully after a bath.

When Henry awoke at 9 A.M., he kept looking at himself in the mirror, while dressed in his blue striped pajamas and feeling their texture. The teakettle was ready, so he drank his tea after putting on his clean and ironed clothes. He ate toast and coffee that Deidre had left on the table, along with a bowl of milk-less cheerios. He had read *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth* before realizing he was hungry again. Henry grabbed the roast beef sandwich from the fridge and decided he wanted to read the comedy plays. Bianca in *Taming of the Shrew* reminded him of Lisa. After finishing that play and starting *The Comedy of Errors*, he dozed off. When he awoke, the stove clock said 3:30, and he knew Deirdre would be home soon. He cleaned off the table except for the play book and put the kettle on again while he finished his leftover cup. A police car siren outside made him jump and spill tea all over the book. He instinctively grabbed his handkerchief, but it failed to wipe up enough. Next, he patted the book more with a tea towel that he had seen Deirdre use, but the stain was still on the pages. Henry was devastated. Such an expensive folio, he thought. He sat still; fumbling with the gold ring Will had left him.

Deirdre arrived, still surprised to see him. She kept thinking that he really

would turn out to be a street person and eventually get tired of staying in one place. He blurted: “I am truly sorry. I spilled tea on your folio and I have no money with me to replace it.” Deirdre looked down at the table and saw the stained book and the hurt in Henry’s eyes. Henry was so upset. He had damaged Will’s book. His dear, dead friend. Deirdre gently led him to the couch and made him sit. She covered him with a comforter, sat next to him, and kissed him on the cheek. “It’s all right, Henry. It’s only a paperback that cost \$25.” Deirdre didn’t understand why she kissed him on the mouth next. She wasn’t romantically interested in him. He kissed her back; only the whistling kettle stopping them. Henry turned away and sadly stared at the London Tower Bridge poster. Deirdre took her time with the new tea when she saw his sad, embarrassed gaze. She threw the wet things in the washer, and wiped the table.

Henry couldn’t believe that he had dozed off yet again. It was dark and he heard the cat purring and smelled tea. He sat up when he felt her lips. “I am sorry that I missed tea with you dear,” he softly whispered. Suddenly he felt her hugs and hands and lips all over him. Elizabeth’s lips. “I was so worried, Henry. The three men that carried you home said they saw you struck by lightning. You have not awakened for two days and three nights. We thought you would die. Oh Henry,” she cried and

pressed her head on his chest.

“I dreamed, Elizabeth. There were exotic foods and strange inventions, odd colors, and it was so very bright—even at night.”

“Yes? I sat with you at night. We lit many candles. I stayed with you until they burned down.” Their gray cat jumped on the bed again, and Henry stroked it. He saw Elizabeth’s tears and reached for his handkerchief that wasn’t there. His eyes widened, trying to remember something. “And there were so many books Elizabeth; marvelous, marvelous books.”



Joseph R. De Mare

Good Morning America

"What a loser," Paul said to the television.

The pretty morning show host, Kate Partridge, continued as if he had said nothing, of course. She was interviewing a rather tall, gaunt man who was standing behind the waist high barricades, holding up a sign reading, "I Love You, RACHEL!" in gold glitter paint. "How long have you two been together?" she asked. She had to shout to be heard over the cheering, waving crowd pressing in on the man. Many had signs of their own that said things like "Happy Fiftieth Richard!" or "Spartans Rule!" They bumped and jostled each other for a moment in front of the camera.

"Fifteen years!" he yelled into the proffered microphone, "But she..." the microphone was suddenly pulled away as the hostess turned to face the camera, the brightness of her teeth rivaling that of her not-too-short yellow dress.

"Isn't that sweet?" Kate asked her co-hosts and the rest of America, "And when we come back, we're going to give you your complete weather forecast. Then it's a look at the history of the bikini."

Paul dunked another half piece of toast in his morning coffee. The trick was to get the toast as saturated as possible without having it break off in the cup or on the journey from the coffee table to mouth. Over the years, he had gotten pretty skilled

and was almost always rewarded by the sweet buttery bitter taste, though occasional accidents were inevitable. He watched the now muted TV screen as grossly inflated cartoon animals floated across virtual skies attempting to persuade him to change his car insurance company.

For some reason, the tall man with the sign irritated him. Where was Rachel? Why was that guy there alone? He had looked a little seedy, a little raggedy around the edges. Maybe they had broken up. Maybe the whole thing, the sign, getting on national TV, was a desperate ploy to get her back. "What a loser," he said again--this time to his apartment in general.

Paul had known a girl named Rachel once. She was his third or fourth girlfriend after college. She had long red hair and was just a tiny bit overweight. They had gone together for eight months. It was during that time that he had been promoted to assistant director of the billing department. They liked each other well enough, but after eight months, they both found themselves attracted to other people and had parted "amicably." What was that other girl's name? Ellen? Susan? Gretchen? Anyway, it never worked out and he started getting very busy with his new position.

He smiled, carrying the empty coffee cup to the kitchen sink, remembering the promotions and the quick rise up the corporate ladder to the head of the billing division. Division head before 30--that was really something. Then came the decision to move all the billing to Mexico. On his way back to the couch, he stopped and looked again at the thank-you card from Alejandro, the man he had trained to take over his own job. Of course, he hadn't known that at the time. His boss, the vice president, had assured him that after the restructuring Paul would be brought to the national headquarters. That

was a lie. He had been fired without so much as a 'thank you' card from the company. Paul's only solace was that shortly afterward, the vice president was also 'right sized' out of his job. Alejandro's card said "Muchas Gracias" in his spidery handwriting. He had paper-clipped to it a picture of himself and his family waving at the camera. By now, the paper clip was getting rusty and Paul wondered again why he kept that card displayed so prominently on his apartment's mantle.

He had to sit through three more commercial breaks and two more weather reports before the promised history of the bikini. It was a disappointment. First of all, they never mentioned the nuclear weapons tests of the nineteen fifties. He happened to know that women started wearing bikinis because, when H-bombs were being set off every week, they thought the world was about to end and modesty didn't matter any more. The nuclear bombs that destroyed the bikini atoll changed women's fashion forever. Also, the models they used were all too skinny. To Paul, they looked like fifteen year olds. Now, Rachel had filled out her bikini very nicely... Somewhere he had a picture of her he had taken while they were on a vacation to Myrtle Beach. Briefly, he thought about calling her again. He imagined how a 'get in touch' phone call would go up to the point where she would invariably ask what he was doing now. He would have to answer "nothing." He dropped the idea.

The end credits started to roll for the morning show. As usual, he got out the list of things to do that he had made the night before. He hovered over the list with a felt tipped marker. He checked off 'eat Breakfast' and 'watch morning show.' He paused over the 'Buy new dress shirt.' That could perhaps wait until he had an actual job interview scheduled. Paul went to his computer and checked his checking account balance. He

scrolled down past the automatic withdrawals for his car payment and health insurance, came to his current balance and stopped. \$9,850.57. That was all that was left from the sale of his condo, less than three months of living expenses. He stared at the number for a long time. Suddenly, he put an "X" through his entire list, got up and walked out of his apartment into the bright June sunlight.

He didn't know where he was going but he held his back straight and marched quickly down the road. Something had to give: Something had to change.

He walked past the seemingly endless strings of pizza and hamburger franchise stores surrounding his apartment complex. The hamburger businesses were open and their drive in window lines were packed with SUV's and vans, each with a single driver, each trying to gulp down a little sugar starch meat and caffeine before going on to wherever they were going. Through the glare of the rising sun reflected off the sides of their cars, the drivers turned to look at Paul through sunglasses or tinted windows. He realized with a start that he had stopped and was staring at the line of cars. He started walking again.

Now he was walking through a part of the city which was not nearly as 'nice.' The fast food places were strung out, sometimes two or three blocks apart. As he passed a McDonald's he noticed that the yellow of the giant 'M' was exactly the same shade of yellow as the dress that Kate, the morning show host had worn earlier. Was that a sign, he wondered, or a coincidence, or maybe even subliminal advertising. Between the isolated restaurants, there were: empty store fronts; abandoned auto repair places; craft shops; and pet grooming stores. Some had dusty "We Have Moved" signs in the window. Most were simply quietly crumbling. His legs had started to ache. How long had he

been walking? Two hours? Four? He turned the corner and found himself face to face with the Greyhound bus station. Six of the huge buses sat idling, adding another layer of diesel soot to the grey concrete walls of the bus bays. He walked past the buses, catching a whiff of sickly sweet disinfectant. Ignoring the "DO NOT USE THIS ENTRANCE" sign, he entered the bus terminal.

The huge ceilings, rumbling air ducts and shifting shadows in the Buffalo terminal gave the impression of bustling activity, but the dozen or so people scattered among the hundreds of hard, plastic seats were anything but animated. Slouching morosely, they seemed to be immobilized by the many layers of clothes they wore. Sweaters on top of hooded sweatshirts, underneath ragged, dark jackets made them look as if they were wearing everything they owned, and perhaps some were.

The ticket counter was hiding away at one end of the terminal. The overweight man behind the three inch thick glass certainly wasn't in any hurry to reveal himself from behind his desk as Paul tapped on the scratched and clouded glass. "Excuse me..." The man behind the glass looked up but said nothing. "How much for a ticket to New York City?"

"Sixty-five dollars."

"And when's the next bus out?"

"There's one leaving in about five minutes. After that, the next one is in twelve hours." Paul was taken aback. Somehow he had anticipated that there would be a long wait for the next bus--that he could find a restaurant, drink coffee and think about his next move. Move towards what? Why was he here? What was he doing? Suddenly,

he felt sweat pouring out of every pore in his body. He anxiously glanced around the terminal and noticed several of the sitting people staring at him with some interest.

"One please." Paul said to the man. Once he had made his decision, he felt calm, just as quickly as he had felt anxious. As his debit card was swiped, he thought '\$9,875.57.'

"Gate 8A. You'd better hurry, Sam likes to leave early, he's got a girlfriend in New York."

"It's been a pleasure talking with you." Paul had meant to say it sarcastically, but he suddenly realized it was true. Running back through the terminal, he imagined the heads of the overly clothed people turning to follow him. Back out through the door he had come in (the other side was much more polite. It said, "Thank you for riding with us.") he saw a bus stopped at the edge of the parking lot with its left turn signal blinking, waiting for a break in traffic. Really sprinting for the first time in years, Paul suddenly had a flash of memory. He remembered running down a hillside at Chestnut Ridge park, arms back like a swept-wing fighter and for the merest fraction of a second, felt the same weightlessness he had felt as a child. Then he was banging on the bus door with both hands. "Sam! Sam! Let me in," Sam opened the bus door, scowling slightly.

"Do I know you?" Sam asked, as he took Paul's ticket.

"No, the man at the ticket counter told me your name."

"Oh, that's Jim for you. He'd call your wife and tell her when it was your girlfriend's birthday just to see what would happen. That man just has to tell everybody everything. Well, there's some empty seats towards the back."

Paul made his way towards the back of the bus, touching the slightly oily seat covers for support. He noticed several young mothers with small children. The excited kids were talking loudly, pointing out every truck and police car. It was clear that they felt the whole experience was some kind of magical adventure. There were some of the raggedy looking people from inside the terminal, some college students plugged into I-pods with their eyes closed and one business man in a suit and tie, typing away furiously on a laptop. When the bus pulled sharply into the traffic, Paul found himself having to grab onto the luggage shelf, hanging over a pleasant looking middle aged woman. For a few seconds, it was all he could do to keep from falling across her lap. When the bus straightened, Paul was able to stand up. "Sorry..." he said, embarrassed. She gave a small smile, but said nothing.

Towards the back, as promised, he found two empty seats next to each other. He sat down with his back to the window, putting his feet on the empty seat. 'Now,' he thought to himself, 'now I can finally figure out what I'm doing.' To his great surprise, he promptly fell asleep. When he woke up, his first sensation was thirst. "Rachel?" he rasped. Then he opened his eyes and faced a moment bordering on panic as his mind tried to make sense of the lumpy shapes of the bus seats, the glare from the windows, and the pains in his stiff legs and back. He closed his eyes, shook his head, and the memories fell into place one by one. Paul stood up and looked around, the bus was empty except for Sam who was standing at the front, cleaning his sunglasses with his shirt.

"You'd better get a move on," Sam called back, "This is just a 15 minute stop." Staggering slightly, Paul made his way through the empty bus and out into the bright sun washed concrete of the Syracuse terminal. After paying \$2 for a 6 ounce bottle of

plastic flavored water, Paul began pacing up and down inside the terminal. It was very different from the cavernous Buffalo terminal. Here, plastic orange chairs were spaced around square white tables. These tables were squeezed into a narrow corridor between a row of vending machines on one side and the outside wall on the other. Claustrophobia was avoided, however, because the outer wall was all glass so that the bus riders sitting at the tables could contemplate both the parking lot and the antiquated brick buildings of downtown Syracuse beyond. Paul thought it was silly to go right from the seats on the bus to the chairs in the terminal, so as he drank his bottled water, he strode up and down past his traveling companions. They were all chatting amicably with each other and eating snacks like barbecue flavored potato chips which came in either tiny bags they had purchased from the vending machines, or large economy sized bags they had carried in from the bus.

On his fourth sashay past the tables, Paul was surprised by an empty chair skidding out in front of him. "Have a seat," said the man in the business suit, "You're making me dizzy." Paul stood awkwardly for a moment, then sat down at the table.

"Chips? They're barbecue." The woman he had almost fallen upon was sitting to his right. She pushed the large open bag towards him.

"Thanks," Paul replied, reaching in. He suddenly realized he had eaten nothing for hours. The salty chips tasted delicious, but he'd be thirsty again in minutes. That would mean a second bottle of water...\$9,781.57.

"So, why are you headed for the City?" asked the business man, "Job interview?"

"Yes," Paul lied quickly and easily. "I haven't worked in a while."

"Then why don't you have any luggage?" asked the woman.

"Easiest thing in the world," the businessman jumped in as Paul stared blankly at her. "You don't bring clothes into New York City. They have the best tailors in the world. If you want a really nice suit, tailored just to you so that you'll look really sharp at your interview, you buy a brand new suit in the City. Am I right?" Paul nodded.

"Oh, I see... My name is Janice by the way."

"Bill Richardson."

"Paul." Paul shook Bill's confidently proffered hand, turned to Janice and they clasped hands briefly. "So, Janice, What brings you to New York City?"

"My sister. She's editor of a magazine and she lives by herself. But, because she's working all the time, her apartment's a pig sty. Every six months or so I use up a little vacation time and surprise her. I clean up her apartment, do some cooking, freeze a bunch of food. She takes me to a fancy Manhattan restaurant and maybe see a show. Then it's back home to Buffalo."

"You clean your sister's apartment?"

"Oh, I don't mind. I get out a little, after all. My idiot husband dumped me for a twenty-something five years ago. Our son is out of the house, almost done with college. At least my Ex is still paying for that, But I had to get a job and sell the house. So, it's just me, and I refuse to get a cat!"

"Your husband left you," Paul said, "Then he IS an idiot. If you've got someone good in your life, you hang on to them with everything you've got. You don't dump

them because you think someone else might be better. That's my motto."

"Oh, and do you have someone good in your life, now?" Janice asked.

"Well, heh, that's my motto now. It wasn't always my motto."

"Uh-HUH." said Janice.

"Don't drink and drive. That's my motto," said Bill. "Three DUI's and they took my license. So, now I cover my territory by bus. Turned out to be a great thing, though. I can get lots of work done, and with wireless e-mail, all the paperwork is done before I arrive. So all I have to do is take the client to dinner, catch a ball game, and head back home again."

The terminal's loudspeakers suddenly assaulted them with a harsh voice that Paul couldn't understand. But, everyone else started pushing their chairs back and standing up. Soon he was back on the bus, sipping his second bottle of water and watching the rural countryside slide by. Again he wondered what he was doing. Why had he plucked himself out of his life like that? No one even knew he was gone. He could call his mother, but he had left his cell phone on its charger in the kitchen. As he watched the trees streaming past the window, he started playing a little mental game he had played as a child. He imagined himself in the scenery: pushing through bushes; jumping or wading the creeks; wearing a backpack with a wooden walking stick. He kept playing the game until the evening fell and Sam turned on the bus's inside lights. Paul suddenly found himself looking at himself as the darkened windows became mirrors.

The reflection was so clear that it felt to Paul as if he were watching a long, mood-setting scene in a detective show. But, if he was an extra, where was the star? The

businessman? Paul scanned the window and saw him reflected, bathed in the pale light from his laptop computer screen, laughing. 'Probably reading jokes on his e-mail' Paul thought--a sure sign of an extra. No, it's not him. The divorced woman? Her reflection seemed to be sleeping. Probably not the star of the show. His gaze settled back on himself. Perhaps he was the star after all. Maybe this wasn't some sort of crime show, but a P.O.V. public television vignette sort of thing. Paul yawned and fell asleep.

This time he was woken up by Janice gently shaking his shoulder. "I wasn't going to leave you asleep this time. The bus driver's already gone. You could've woken up in Florida."

"Thanks." Paul smiled, embarrassed. "Are you going to your sister's now?"

"She's already here," Janice nodded out the window. Paul turned and saw a short, thin woman with glasses and curly hair. Everything about her radiated energy and intensity, even the short, quick waves she was aiming at her sister.

"Janice! Come on, let's go!" her voice pierced the bus windows.

"Are you going to be okay?" Janice asked Paul.

"I think so, thanks again."

"Well...See you."

The hustle and bustle in Grand Central Station was no illusion. The overly clad people were there, but they were banished to dark corners and edges. Everyone else was in a hurry, heading somewhere fast. This time, Paul's resolve faltered. He looked around the station, not sure what to do next. A brightly lit wall of telephone handsets caught his

attention. He walked over to it and saw that it was covered with ads for different hotels. He recognized a Marriot that he had stayed at once for a conference. He picked up the phone and a cool, professional voice directed him to a van that brought him to a walnut panelled lobby.

After the details of check in were completed (\$9,400 left even with a AAA discount), Paul asked the young man behind the counter if there was anyplace he could buy art supplies.

"Big presentation tomorrow, huh?"

"Something like that."

"Well, there's a little convenience store in the basement level. They have markers and poster board. I hope that's enough."

Twenty minutes later and \$40 poorer, Paul burst into his hotel room with an arm full of art supplies and snacks. Laying everything out on one of the two beds, he started to work. Somewhere around 2 in the morning, he accessed the internet through the hotel's service on his television set. After giving up his name, e-mail address, and \$3.00, he managed to get on a website that offered "free" tickets to New York shows. Another hour and quite a bit of personal information later, he secured a ticket for the morning after next. He fell asleep sitting up on his bed with the keyboard across his lap.

He woke up the next day just before noon, still in the clothes he had worn the day before. He was laying, sprawled, on top of the keyboard. His head was near the foot of the bed and he looked up to see "Error 404: File not Found" glaring at him from the TV screen. Rubbing his eyes, he looked around at the mess he had made of the room.

Doubt again assailed him. What was the point of this plan? He should get right back on the bus and head home while he still had some money left. Then his eyes fell upon the poster he had made the night before. It was beautiful.

In high school, he had won the annual art show three times. His grades were poor because he worked so slowly that most of his assignments were late. He felt that his pictures had to be perfect, and this poster very nearly was. He had used everything he could remember about shading and contrast to create depth. The letters seemed to leap off of the paper. He was sure they'd look great on TV.

Now for the suit. He took a long shower, then rinsed his underwear in the sink. Alternating between the microwave and the hair dryer, he managed to get them dry in about 20 minutes. The rest of his clothes still smelled of bus, but they would have to do. He went down to the lobby and had a long talk with the concierge. With directions to a tailor in his pocket, he burst out onto the streets of New York.

He had forgotten, if he had ever really known, just how purposeful everyone looked. They all seemed to be in a competition over who was busier, who was locked into a more urgent conversation. He saw a man and a woman walking together, each having a frenetic conversation through the bluetooth plugged in their ears and periodically turning to ask each other questions about pricing or delivery times. Lunch was two hot dogs with sauerkraut, relish and ketchup bought from a man with a silver sided cart shaded by a red and white umbrella. He tried to share in the spirit of the City by eating them while walking briskly to the tailor's, but the resulting ketchup and sauerkraut stains down the front of his shirt looked distinctly unsophisticated.

However, the stains did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of the short, grey

haired tailor. Joe, of 'Joe's One Hour Tailors' greeted Paul like a long lost friend. "You must be Paul!" Joe almost shouted, grasping Paul's hand with both hands and pumping it vigorously, "John called and said you were coming! Job interview, hey? That's great! What do you do, Paul?" Joe was suddenly perfectly still, gazing at Paul with laser-like intensity.

"Uhhh..accounts receivable. I was division head at AP Parts."

"Wow! That's great!" Joe was again all animation and excitement. "I used to buy all my mufflers from them back when I had a car. But, who needs cars when you live in the City? Where do you live, Paul?" Alternating between almost crazed volubility and intense listening, Joe plied Paul with questions that Paul could not fathom had anything to do with buying a suit. As they were talking, Joe led Paul back to a small room filled with half-finished suits and bolts of expensive fabric. He took Paul's measurements and then stood, tapping his lips with his index finger, regarding Joe speculatively.

"Aren't you going to write down my measurements?"

"What? Oh no, it's all up here," Joe tapped his temple. "You call me up from Buffalo six months from now, I hear your voice, you tell me your name and I can make you another suit, exactly the same. Call me up a year from now...and well a lot can happen in a year..." Joe patted his belly, "I might need to measure you again. But I'll remember you and remember what I sold you. Now I think I have the suit for you." As he said this last, Joe's tone took on an incredulous note, as if there were some fantastic coincidence occurring. Ducking into a back room he emerged with a light grey suit on a hanger. He held the hanger in one hand and draped the suit over the other arm precisely the way a knight presents his sword to a king. Joe stood expectantly before Paul in this

position, waiting. Unsure of what to do next, Paul took a tiny corner of the pant leg and rubbed it between his thumb and forefinger.

"Feels nice..." he said.

"It should, this is an Italian suit. You'll notice that the fabric is not very heavy, but it has wool in it so you can wear it in summer. However, it will still keep you warm during those Buffalo winters. You look good in this color and notice the collar. Button the dress shirt, put on a tie and this looks like a very conservative suit, but with no tie, the collar opens up a little. This is now something you can wear out to a bar, maybe even on the dance floor, huh?"

Paul couldn't help but smile. Part of him wanted to ask the price. Another part, which unexpectedly took over, simply said, "I'll take it."

"Come back in an hour."

One hour and ten minutes later, Paul stepped out onto the street with a new suit in its protective plastic cover slung over his shoulder. Now his feeling of purposelessness was gone. He had a brand new, hand tailored suit. It must have been obvious to anyone watching him that he had places to go, important things to decide. Savoring this source of surety, he decided to walk about the city a bit, pausing in front of expensive stores and regarding their displays seriously as if he might want to buy some \$400 shoes to go with his suit or a \$4,000 diamond bracelet for a fiancée back home. He found himself on the 100 block of West 51st street, walking behind two women. One was talking at a blistering pace and kept trying to hurry the other along, getting a few steps ahead of her very quickly then having to turn back and wait. But the second woman maintained a

calm, steady pace, responding with five words for every twenty the first woman blurted out. It suddenly occurred to Paul that he knew them.

"Janice?" he asked, tapping the slower woman on the shoulder.

"Oh look, it's Paul," said Janice turning and smiling but continuing to walk. "And you got your suit. It looks good."

"Paul from the bus?" asked the other woman, "My sister hasn't stopped talking about you since she arrived."

"Sara!" Janice blushed and Paul felt the same quickening of his pulse that he remembered from his teens and twenties. It had been a long time.

"We'd love to stop and chat, but we've got reservations at Spago's. Do you want to come with us?"

"Oh no," said Paul, I've still got to get ready for my interview."

"Oh, when is it?" asked Janice.

Paul almost started his next sentence with "Oh" but he caught himself. Instead he just said "First thing in the morning."

"Then you're going back to Buffalo?"

"Yes, I guess I'll catch the evening bus." They had arrived in front of Spago's and stopped, facing each other.

"Well, good luck." Janice gave a quick, embarrassed smile and the two women walked into the restaurant.

The electronic screeching of his hotel phone woke Paul up at 3:30 the next morning. He showered and then put on his new suit without a tie. It fit him perfectly, as far as he could tell. He decided to take a cab to the studio to protect his sign. The cab ride was \$22, with tip. He started to do the math to figure exactly how much money he had left, but then he realized that he had lost track and had absolutely no idea. The realization left him standing there in the pre-dawn chill, confused. Suddenly a van pulled up and about a dozen rail thin high school girls tumbled out and started running towards the illuminated area where crews were setting up cameras and putting the waist high barricades into place. Paul surmised from their signs and loud, excited conversation that the girls were the Wasilla, Alaska high school volleyball team, come to New York to compete in the Nationals. He was worried for a minute that the girls would hog the camera and that he would have to push through them to get on the air. But, when they reached the barricades, they positioned themselves directly in front of the camera. Paul smiled. He knew that the best place to stand to get interviewed was about 7 feet to the right. He took up his post and waited.

The glare from the camera lights at first made it impossible to see anything but the other people in the front rows and a patch of asphalt about 15 feet across. Then, as the sun slowly rose, he began to see the grey sky and the dark skyscrapers around them. More and more people were coming. Vans, taxis, and buses would pull up and people would pile out--middle aged people squealing and running the same as the school children. A man wearing headphones called for their attention. Then, shouting, he told them all what they could and could not say, pointed out the "applause" sign and had them do a few practice cheers. Then someone spotted one of the hosts, and they all cheered again.

Finally, it was time. From the front row, Paul could see the same monitors that the hosts could see. He watched as the opening credits ran and the studio hosts began their morning banter. Kate Partidge took up her position in front of the volleyball team, holding her microphone in one hand, the other hand was on her ear that held her earpiece where she was getting some last minute instruction from the director. From the back, Paul could see the transmitter that was belted onto her lower back and the spiraling, black cord that ran up from it and then disappeared under her hair. Then more lights blazed upon them and the 'applause' sign started flashing. The cheering was deafening. Paul was waving his sign as Ms. Partridge suddenly started talking to the camera as if it were a person.

"Thank you, Keith. We've got a really enthusiastic crowd here today!" They all yelled even louder. She took a few steps towards Paul. "And here's someone who obviously took some time on his sign. 'I love you, Kate!' That's my name, you know. Is she your girlfriend?" Here it was, the microphone was before his face and the lights and camera aimed directly at him.

"Actually, she doesn't even know I exist." he replied.

Looking confused, Kate asked, "So are you hoping that she will notice you by getting on TV?"

Paul just smiled and after a one second pause, Kate turned back to the camera and said, "Well, ladies, if you want to get noticed, you need to stick around for the last segment on our look at the history of women's fashion. We'll take a close look at the mini-skirt. Next up is your complete weather forecast."

The lights went out, Kate Partridge walked away from the crowd, back towards the camera and Paul allowed himself to be bumped and jostled to the back of the crowd. He stayed through the rest of the show, stayed for a while even after the square had cleared out and the television crew had gone. Then he dumped his sign into a wire trash bin alongside others ("Bulldogs Rule!!" "Happy 97th, Grandma") and walked slowly down the block, looking for a subway entrance.

He checked out of his hotel without even glancing at the final bill, ate lunch at a diner where he paid three times what he would have paid for a hamburger with some chips in Buffalo, and wandered the streets, wearing his new suit and carrying his old clothes and the remaining art supplies in the white plastic bags he had gotten from the convenience store.

Evening found him sitting in the bus terminal, waiting alongside the bulkily dressed, the mothers with children in tow and the college kids. He was trying to wrap his mind around what had happened. For about 30 seconds, he had been before the eyes of 20 million people. No one in his family had ever done anything remotely like that. He wondered briefly if his mother had been watching. No, she never watched the morning shows. Did anyone recognize him? Did it matter? He was still wondering as he shuffled onto the bus and took a window seat, the bags with his clothes still clutched in his lap. He was startled as a middle-aged woman tossed herself into the seat next to his. He was even more startled to see that it was Janice.

"I was hoping you would notice me." She said in a slightly accusatory tone. "I was sitting in just the perfect spot for you to turn your head a little and see me, but you just kept staring off into space."

"I'm sorry..."

"Don't be. I guess I am a little old for that kind of game," she said, sighing, "I saw you on TV. Who's Kate?"

Paul looked at her for a long moment before answering. "You know what? I don't ever want to talk about Kate again. I can finally say that I'm over her." Janice smiled. "Why are you on this bus? I thought you were staying at your sister's through the weekend?"

"I cleaned her dishes, did her laundry, vacuumed the living room and straightened up her DVD collection. She can hire somebody to do the bathroom. But do you really not know why I'm here?"

Slowly, Paul worked it out. "You knew when I was leaving because you asked me..." Janice smiled again, and this time Paul did, too. Somewhere around Albany, she fell asleep with her head on his shoulder. He didn't mind a bit.

When he arrived back at his apartment, the television was still on. He turned it off by unplugging it. Then he went out to his garage and brought in the box it had come in. He had saved every bit of the original packaging, even the black twist-ties that bundled the cords together. He meticulously packed the television away, then went to his internet computer. Within an hour, he had auctioned it off for \$400. As he was getting ready to take the TV to the post office, he checked his phone. It had 22 messages. Apparently people he knew must have seen him on TV after all. He decided to sit down and make a new list of things to do before he left the house. First, he wrote down, then checked off "Get on National Television." Next he wrote "Answer Phone

Messages." Finally he wrote, "Dinner with Janice."



Roseanna Deerchild

wedding portrait

mama is a size eight
 thirty years old
 very late to the vows
 but fits easy
 into the long white dress
 she hasn't known him long
 his pale body
 does not make her heart dance
 but his promises do
 he will take her away
 the new hydro dam
 swallows the land
 the water floods in
 the people flood out
 a house new furniture
 indoor plumbing blue curtains

room for all her children
they will pick them like flowers
plant them in their own garden
whatever she wants—all she wants
is a happy ending
mama fixes the veil to her hair
she can't take the wicked whispers
her last baby's daddy never
promised her anything
just played his old guitar
smiled his crooked smile
at the chapel her eldest
rips her white dress begs
don't marry him
but mama's had too many
celebration drinks
travelling from house to house
in the wedding bombardier
an old B12 snowmobile
picks people up

drops them off
at the social hall
all night long
mama stands in front
of those who said this day
would never come says
I do in a peculiar voice
not quite her own

winter festival

the giant ice raven smiles crookedly
over the annual winter festival ten feet tall
tasselled red toque blue jacket
his great black tail fans out
cartoon mascot for a mining town

kids boost each other up
slide down his wide back
off the tip of his tail
laugh scream get back in line
trails of paint down their backs

only a few injuries
a split lip a sprained wrist
no concussions

they look like ravens
gliding downwind

off the angled roof
of the arena
they caw cackle flip 'round
for another turn

the festival is thick with people
defying minus 30 degrees
(minus 40 with the wind chill)
to pick the best miner
the top trapper

watch hockey curling
men carry heavy packs
of flour for distance
squaw wrestling is always popular
so is axe throwing
hardly ever at the same time

no hotdogs or ice cream
here steaming moose nose soup
is ladled into styrofoam cups
frozen bannock dipped into broth
desert is a snow cone

this is the north

a festival
carved out of frozen earth
a celebration
of the difficult histories
between trappers and miners

miners sit in the beer garden
drink draught after draught
my great-grandfather
broke this land
been here ever since
we are all miners

don't know what we'd do
if the nickel ran out

at the next table
trappers stare into their cups
they know how long
the miners have been here
they count the years
watch them take apart the earth
dig into her gut
offer nothing in return
the fur table closes earlier every year
because of those god damn
animal saviours down south
still can't be a miner
we're trappers
we are the land

this is the north

old men arguing over her

festival after festival

crazy horse is a girl

our street is at the top
of the only hill in town
it's steep curves to the right
a four way stop at the bottom

kids play chicken on their bikes
race down two at a time
until someone breaks
leaves question marks
in the gravel or fly full speed
through the cross road
like an exclamation point

the possibility of grievous injury
makes their pale skin flush say
holy shit did you see that

someone double dog dares me

and i get my sisters old bike
my feet don't reach the ground
so i push it to the top get on
take off the air and the adrenalin
tingles my skin

half way down i see
plumes of dust like balloons
heading for the intersection
push back on the peddles
expect the surety of breaks
but the chain whirs uselessly
fear flares in my chest
i can't slow down

my racing rival skids to a stop
near the bottom
open-mouthed as i speed past
braids flying elbows up

eyes straight ahead
the sound of dog barking
somewhere behind me

car and bike close in
until the middle aged
women behind the wheel
finally sees me surprise
then panic blares her horn
screeches to a stop screams
jesus, mary and josiff
but i'm long gone

back at the top of the hill
the boy i raced waits
kids stare say
you didn't even slow down

i tell them i wasn't scared

that the car missed me

by this > < much

tell them

i am crazy horse

fearless

ghostlike

northern lights

remind me of the pow wow dancers

that came to our school once

they looked like new coins

sounded like them when they danced

now i watch a night pow wow

grass dancer with his long green

ribbons sway long paths

for fancy shawl dancers to follow

shocks of yellow red purple butterflies

jingle dresses spark off stars

even orion ursa major

hang bells on his belt

around his neck

dances around the full moon drum

mama told me once not

to whistle at the northern lights
or they would come down
dance me right into the sky

she thought it would scare me
but it's these cracked and narrow
sidewalks that tangle my feet pull
me down the straight lines
of whichever street where ever avenue

the northern lights dance
a whistle rises from my lips

back home

mama says we're going back home
for a funeral and even though
we should be sad we hide smiles
it's been years since we left

when we get off the ferry
a crowd meets us
aunties uncles
about 20 cousins
press in close touch
our hair kiss our faces

at auntie's house
she feeds us moose meat
fried in a cast iron pan
bannock and lard
goose and macaroni soup

our cousins take us down to the lake
we skip rocks play watch the sky turn
orange red purple until fat with
stars
they ask what's town like
we say confusing

our parents play cards
drink red rose tea in mason jars
tease each other in cree
guffaw say tapwe
this is where mama was born
where pictures of my absent father
hang on family walls my pictures
in auntie and uncle's memory boxes
me in rubber boots and diapers
sitting next to my cousin
my brothers and sister
dusty faces messy hair

playing with puppies
in a bush camp
auntie folds her soft brown hands
around mine holds me in a place
i was lost from whispers
my girl
uncle asks do you remember
I fed you sucker head soup
we raised you in this house
do you remember natanis

and in my skin
the same colors
as theirs
i do

*natanis – my daughter

*tapwe - true

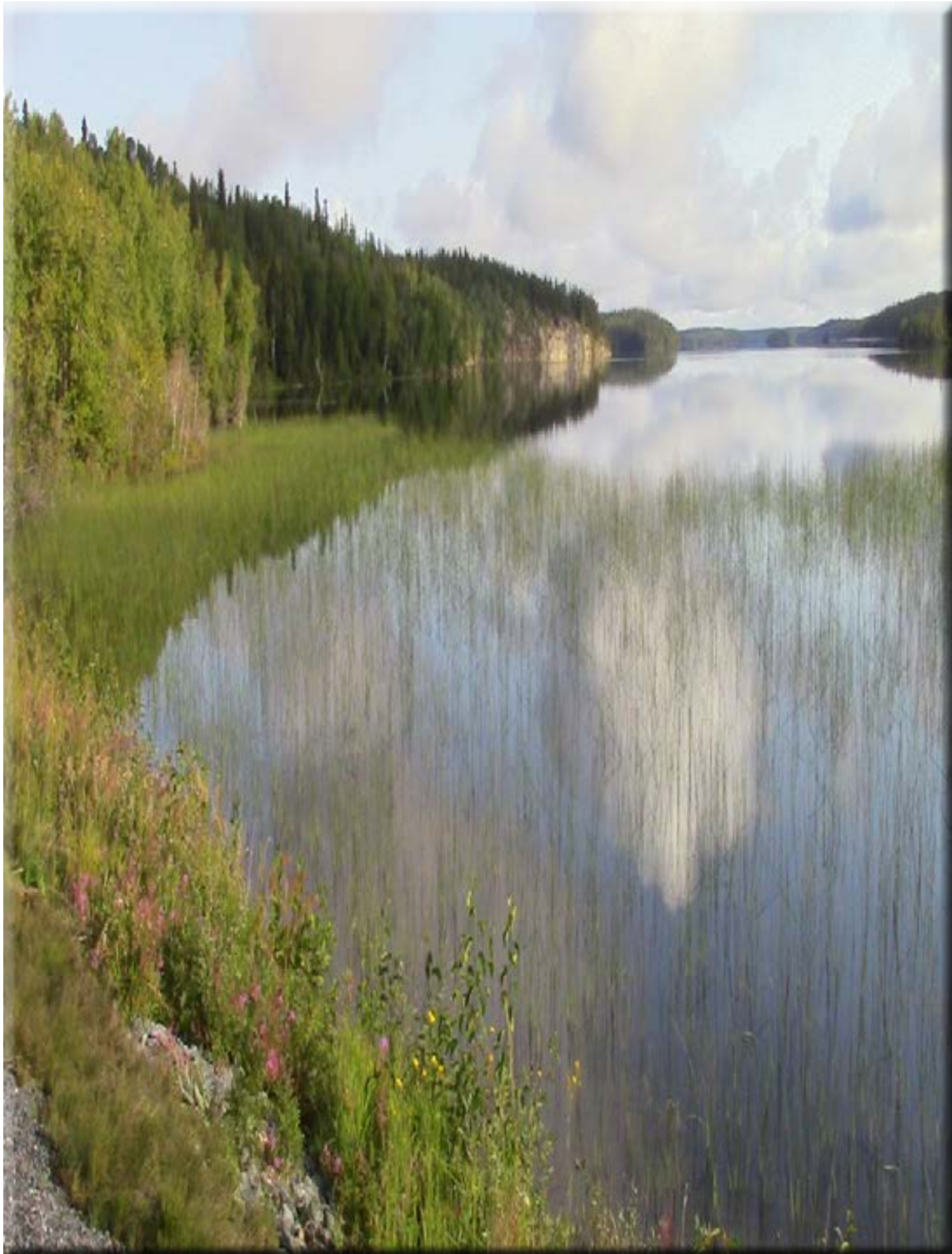
"wedding portrait," "northern festival," crazy horse is a girl," "northern lights," and "back home" have been reprinted from *this is a small northern town*, J. Gordon Shillingford Publishing, Winnipeg, 2008.



Laura Hanna

After Dusting Canary Yellow Walls

It's about the rose,
about its inability
to tell me
about the beauty
in your eyes,
their tiredness
leaving behind
a trace of blue—
a memory
for
everything
they
touch.



Mary Kennan Herbert

SEA PASSAGE

I waited for arrival of the afternoon newspaper,
 the St. Louis Star-Times, which came like a grenade
 onto our porch. I opened it to see photos—
 starving P.O.W.s liberated from a prison camp
 somewhere far away, on an island far away.
 The newspaper is no longer with us, gone
 like childhood, grandma, and even her Bible.
 Entranced with newspapers, harbingers
 of visual and verbal stimuli, I loved to look
 at the maps with broken lines and arrows.
 Such a neat phrase: the Pacific eater,
 where ships and sharks jostled for attention,
 and pictures of handsome young guys in
 khaki uniforms caught my eye. A newspaper,
 radio, and poetry contain what I wanted.

THINGS CAN MAKE YOU HAPPY

What you want, you and I know,
is not a white robe in Heaven, but a new car,
a new car, a new car, a trinity of passion,
metallic gleam, eshly glow.

Tickets across the Styx
might be pricy or, surprisingly, free,
if you are ready to take that journey,
alone or with me.

Your lottery stub provides some kicks.
And objects, by all means, are most worthy
of collection. On shelves, in sunlight,
arrange stolen artifacts.

Stu is what we want!

Silver bracelets and diamond studs,
sleek leather seats in that new car.

What smells good? A new wallet!

AUTOMOBILE TRIFECTA

I.

The first car in our family:
a green Buick (it has appeared
in several other poems of mine,
like a beloved country uncle
with chrome, the unsung hero
of many journeys home).

II.

My father's Karmann-Ghia:
his true midlife-crisis beloved
until he got slammed by a truck
(that sucks!). He wore a horse
collar for weeks. Whip-lash,
the price he paid for hubris.

III.

A fat Ford station wagon:
marker of our suburban apogee,
swollen white belly full
of supermarket bags of fruit
and Southern secrets worthy of
Detroit's dozing dragon.

AN ECONOMIST'S GUIDE TO SCRIPTURE

“Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.”

Proverbs 23:4 (KJV)

My neighbor sits in amiable humor
on his front stoop
like a tortoise on some distant planet
calm aboard his sinking ship.
With microbrew and his old dog nearby
he greets us with comforting smile.
His confession compressed in a minute:
he's unemployed, out of a job, no lip.
How unkind to poke or prod for a reason.
He cheerfully provides more.
He's now divorced, an idle comment.
Why fight Fortune? It's all good, get a grip.

PAY NO ATTENTION

“If want of skill, or want of care appear,

Forbear to hiss— the Poet cannot hear”

—Samuel Johnson

A barrage of snickers and hissing

have no impact, nor would air-dissing.

Howls of complaints meet silence

whilst I type these words. I. Can't.

Hear. You. I mumble muttered slurs.

I've learned to tune out, stifle shouts.

Pay no attention to sarcasm, slings

and arrows, sneers. Sometimes it's

earned, of course. Even poets need

occasional taps on the shoulder,

gentle prods I fervently hope, a prod

but, a kick, no. No thrown erasers

allowed.

thin-skinned or thick-skinned,

a writer can't win. Too sensitive,

or insouciantly so? The message

is artfully coined, carefully bagged

for long distances and millennia.

The poet waits and waits. No

praise from the past but, meanwhile,

refuse to listen to the present.

Huzzahs are useless. Yet this mute

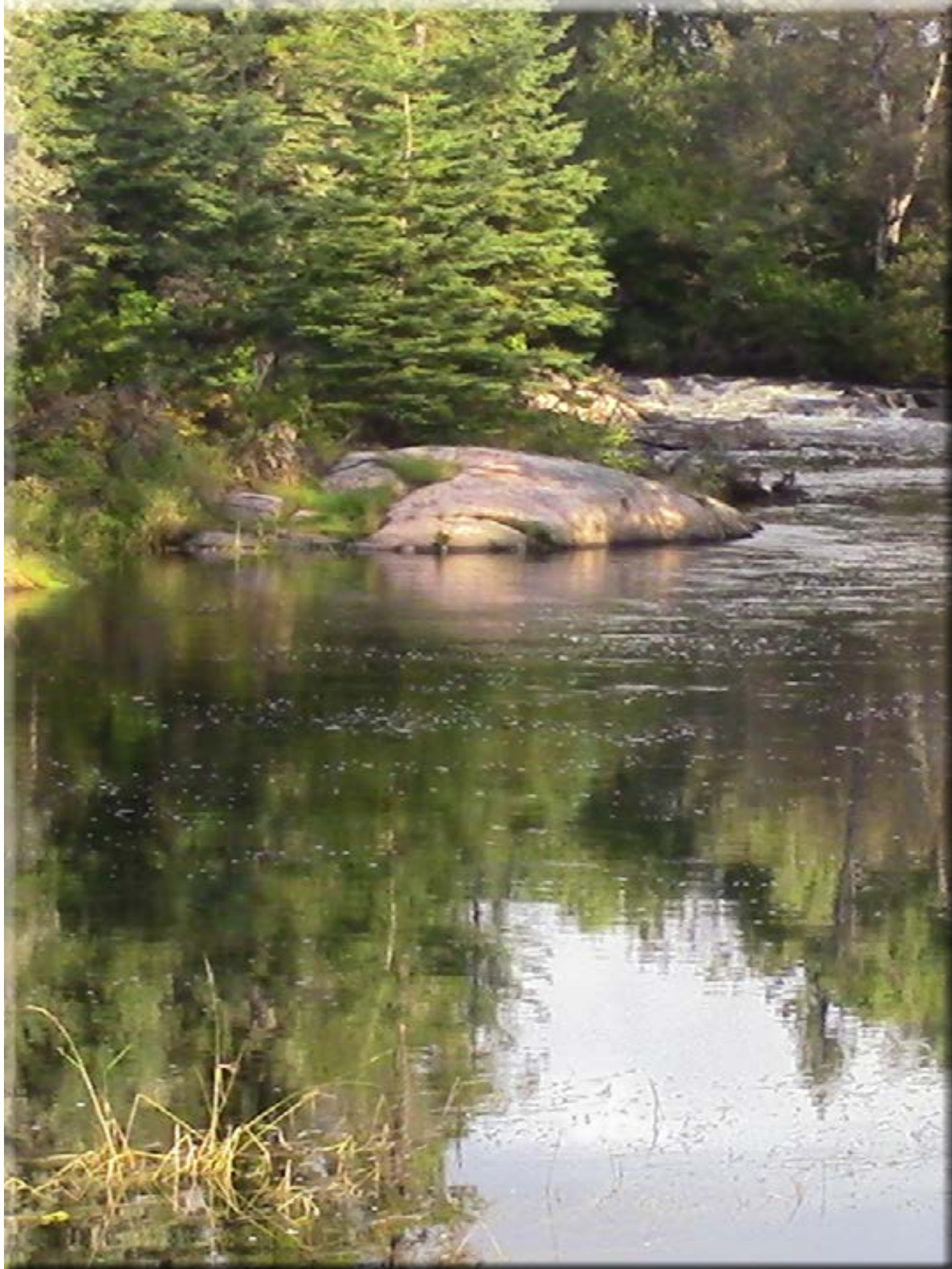
ticket is an engraved invitation

to a future reader who, uncowed,

agrees to read this poem, think,

and maybe smile: it's a win-win.

Jefferson Holdridge



dee Hobshawn-Smith

Marilyn

Her breasts no larger than mine,
 her legend spilling
 from his hands on her dress,
 frozen
 in the photographer's silver sizzle.

She hauled her name like a stone albatross,
 its weight bashing her
 at awkward moments.
 "Sex goddess found dead, naked."
 Asleep one last time, alone,
 closing her luminous eyes,
 their invitation rescinded.

In this morgue of a museum,
her memory shimmers, stereo rainbows on every wall,
gawked at like a sideshow wanna-be goddess
replete with embellishments and relics,
taffeta dresses and chipped Meissen teacups,
her face like Dresden china.
One onlooker, a teenaged mother-girl,
scant halter-top over generous tattoos,
gap-grin teeth wide with youth's audacity,
holds her teething baby
smiling in rattletrap stroller. Her baby loves breasts too,
small hands reaching for the comfort of skin.

Taking Flight

"I want to imagine being in my element."

Daphne Marlatt

The sun rubs the ashes from the forehead of the sky.
An end to mourning: her element has become air,
absolving the soil's magnetic draw.
Not the solidity of mountain slabs, their steady rock
and angled planes like arrowheads.
Forgotten the sweet disguise of mud,
the decades of springtime's call
so fecund it pulled
at her skin, sucked her deep
into its steaming heart, its green desire.

The earth
has held her so long

suddenly released, its pull unstrung,
the archer's crossbow crumbled into dust.

Fly

she must, plumes beneath her thighs,
grow wings, or faith.

Ride

downdraft,

uplift,

cross-current,

invisible wind holds her secure,

flight,

improbable

as the pulse of sprouting seeds in soil.

Finding Faith

Behind the buildings,
through the trees,
narrow as a deer track,
a pheasant has touched down,
its feathered wing-kiss
a brush of angels on the snow,
its footprint inscribed in Braille.

The walk feels like the wild.

Across the field,
snowmobiles have been through.
In their wake,
faux implants,
firm and immobile white breasts.

We fall through to the real snow's soft arms.

Through the weeping birches,
so-blue spruce,
no birds sing,
trees' naked arms
northbound under the silent blue dome.

Inside the quinzie,
constellations trace their silver
sparkle on washed blue and green cut glass.

Each wintry breath an unspoken hope
the sky may crack, shower
gems from a goddess's mantle.

God holds the hammer in the final end

(for Dave Margoshes)

Father Aloysius is shoveling snow again,
looking more peasant than priest,
in flop-eared cap and winter boots.
No cassock.

He stands beneath the snowflakes,
still, regarding the void between each drop.
The monastery's pavement beneath his boots
turned to diamonds that he treads with calm,
a sense of rightness.

He leans forward on his shovel,
runs down the walk,

a celestial curler
clearing the house.

His glorious slide an invitation
through the four foot ring,
bring on your shot rock.

Grace Under Pressure



Photo: Sue Matheson

Levant

The winds often die
Before the sun rises.
The air grows brisk
When it's warm, and cold
If it is cool. Now is
The time to fire the rockets.
The generals know
Before the first birds sing
There's much less risk.
The gas will not blow
To unwanted places,
But in the predawn hours
Of late night lingering

Settle in its traces
Like dew upon the flowers.

Antidote

The lamps are spent. At first you cannot see
Then shapes appear. The source of light is marked.
The incense in the corner burns so softly
Sleep threatens to overtake the dog that's barked.

A voice now offers a choice of pressure points
To unlock the muscles that dam the flow of blood.
Body and soul need someone who anoints
Disease, and banishes tension in the flood,

As touch massages every cardinal sin
shoulders, neck and back, pelvis, hips,
Buttocks, thighs, and calves that underpin

Us as we stiffly turn. Escaping lips:
A sigh of relinquishment; the end of haste;
The renewing water drunk that has no taste.

The gas descends and the body's wholly
Burned, but at first you cannot tell.
There are no blisters, the child still stands, he
Looks shocked but not in pain, then hell

Rises from below, and he takes to bed.
They first gauze his torso. He shakes
Violently. Then they wrap his head
And legs. The minute he's asleep he wakes

In agony, but still can question why
They could bomb civilians, and his school.
Anguish and meaning do not cloud his eye

So like Odysseus', who comes with moly,
Knowing beast and human, kind and cruel.
The snowdrop's icy breath is veiled and holy.

Kenosis

When you were born in a river of blood
The first cut was dealt, the emptying
Begun that would make you a vessel
Of fresh water poured out like wine.

Day and night until it is cool
Along the coasts, the estuaries flood
And create anew what had been design.
Earth and water are mortar and pestle,
Fire and air mixed in the vine.

Our kenosis was your incarnation,
Marshland and stones filtering the brine
Since your favorite purple burst its skin
Deep in the woods, where fresh waters pool,
We've been together station to station.

Mother with Sleeping Child

So sacred it is almost profane
The way she holds the still child
Like a lover on a beach cradling
Her drowned beloved —sexless
But with carnal knowledge from head
To toe, as from birth to death,
The body rocking where it's lain.
The odor of lilies pervades the scene.
Washed, perhaps, ready for bed
Is a curled pietà without the shroud.
Outside the painting, clothes she'll dress
Him in, hanging like the cloud
Above those hills so enchanted and wild
They seem to await the waking breath.

Those hills so mysteriously styled
Some three hundred years shall pass

And they'll replace God at His death.
Glowing with anticipation
Nestled behind the central image
They draw the eye to the City of God
Whose denizens remain beguiled.
The landscape seems to hold its breath
At their powerful turning compass
Pulling all iron toward its gold,
Sparing none, spoiling with its rod
The children of the secular nation
Whose faith in immanence shall rage
Till those enchanted hills unfold.

Origins and Ends

It's hard to transplant a tree
With a taproot. A year
Has passed and few remember
How warm it was this time
Last year, how many trees
Were in flower, how many
Flowers were blooming — out
Of sync and all at once.
But why would they recall
Unless something had happened
To compare that blossoming
With this cold close of March?
Spring sleet and morning frost fall
To make the dawn chorus
More lament than praise

Of powers dividing the woods:
Battle-tested nests
And perches, origins and ends.
Each night a voyage troubles sleep.
We hurry to catch a plane.
When we arrive, no one
Is there to meet us.
The destinations are gone,
As though wiped from the earth
But still there on the map.
So we see from the face of the deep
There can be no other birth.
Of many roots there is only one tap
In leaf where the highest branch extends.

“

Lightning Bug

Or firefly, both are the same
Insect, if not the same music
And place. Interchangeable
In certain regions. The first name
Of dense inland forest and thick
Swamps of the Delta. The second
Cape Cod, the Plains, Black Hills,
Rocky Mountains and the beckoned
And beckoning west, the Sierras,
Nevada and Madre, valleys and desert.
No difference in syllable
Just the darkness their flashing fills
Or leaves empty. Without light
In Western states (like Richard Serra's
“Tilted Arc” that breaks the square)

Fireflies are unseen at twilight,
While lightning bugs assert
Themselves in tremulous chiaroscuro
Against the trees that they are there
Warning of their poison and boldly
Seductive. Their substance Caravaggio
Is said to have used. No wonder
For if not true, it remains coldly
Suggestive of lightning without thunder,
The brute magnificence of the master,
The agony of transcendence and desire
Of consummation and disaster
That dies in a darkening star-like dance.
Which is neither lightning nor fire
Nor disenchantment nor romance.

Battlefield

I was dumb with silence, I held my peace,
even from good; and my sorrow was stirred.

Psalm 39

Yellow jackets aren't one of the gentle bees,
Pollinators who also live underground.
Yesterday, one lit on a strategic perch,
And waited tensely till the grasshopper crossed
Half the breadth of the ramp. It hovered to seize
The moment and so begin the miniature duel,
Almost out of sight and without a sound.
(Like the yellow jacket, death warrants the poem.
There is no intercepting its entry or search
No matter how invasive, destructive or cruel.
Arriving suddenly it flies without home
Encircling the air as though nothing had been.)

But the insect fought hard and mightily tossed
The wasp on its back, again and again
Which stabbed and stabbed. How could its sting
Not kill outright? It hurts us like the devil.
Yes, the yellow jacket was sure it would win,
Fearing nothing, insects, animals or men.
The fighting was fierce, but never was level.
So valiant, the grasshopper had to succumb.
The wasp claimed the prize and went on the wing.
Strangely the battlefield was peaceful and dumb.

Alpha and Omega

Again the planes fly overhead.
bombs drop and tanks advance
As we walk through fields and divisions

Like ghosts untouched by rapid fire
Or shells exploding, wondering what
The war's about. They pile the dead.

We have arrived as if by chance
And know each other by a charm.
They think the other side's a liar.

Self-interest of the fallen world
Without belief and quick to cut
Enemies who mean them harm.

Amid confusion, each one runs
Not to be struck, a body hurled
As shots will scatter all the birds.

It feels like hunger, but it's thirst
For we seek our final words
And suspect we'll only find our first.

Transhumance

On top of steep Monte Faito
A goatherd sat carelessly balanced
On a jutting ledge with a skinful
Of wine and a sun-drenched face,
Turned from what once had been
Fertile valleys on the Bay of Naples
But were now seas of concrete
Built after the Second World War
In peace as the population exploded
And the vestiges of the ancient world
Were more fragmented than before.

After a time the goatherd stood
To nimbly follow the bells of his goats
Echoing through the windblown trees

To take the tratturi's right-of-way
Along the crossing grounds of human
And natural worlds, on the margins
Of the divine, like the Pastori
From the Gospels seeing the Star
Of Bethlehem light up the sky,
Hearing the Angel, "Be not afraid,
The Shepherd, lamb to the slaughter
Brings a Happy Paradise and laughter."
Shepherd and sheep studied each other.

The Zampognari follow their ancestors
Every Christmas down to the coast
To sing of His descent from the heavens.
King of the sky, without clothes or fire
Shining for the fading few who know
The sea, the stars, and the mountainside,
Migrants of summer and winter pastures.

Sword, Compass and Square

Inherited sword of a secret
Society, burnished and decorative.
The family name inscribed, set
Above the mantle. Generations give
To generations. Sign of the cross
Elaborated on the hilt.
Compass and square emboss
A circle, ornate and gilt,
Now on history's ash heap.
No battle lost or won
Buried in the deep
Or glittering in the sun.

We must keep an even compass.
Establish lines of struggle and choice.
Mark center so the circles amass

The full range of tones in a voice.
Frame our windows to capture the light.
Set front door to back to let the air flow.
Encompass the constellations each night.
The curved path described by an arrow.
Prove our skill, our artifice,
Our intellectual range and times,
So seeing once, we never look twice
And trust that what we measured still rhymes.

For we have no Mariner's compass.
Just a deep magnetic pull
Like tidal waters; an empty bus
Waiting for a driver. The lull
Of morning turning to afternoon.
The deeper you go, the colder, more
Stable the temperature. Soon
Blind darkness is perfect. War

Could break out on the surface and we
Know nothing, seeking the poles,
Which themselves are melting to sea,
Like actors who have forgotten their roles.

In a world of wood, being a mason
(Sword, compass and square) we
Must search for stones—preparations begun—
To reconstruct that building squarely.
When the ground is shifting beneath,
When the skies are lowering above,
Our ancestry has naught to bequeath.
The museum has opened the trove.
So heave them, stone upon stone,
Hewing them as they pile higher.
The edifice must stand on its own
In change, sediment, or fire.

Bestiary

If our shade garden was as sensitive
To light and dark as film, and revealed
The imprint of every passing mammal,
Insect, and reptile, what would each day's
Photograph contain? Many a cautious animal,
That's certain. The raccoon, normally concealed
In darkness, which tipped over the garbage
Last night, reminding us where we live
We're not alone, that the penetrating rays
Of the sun make the outside more absent
(Note the mosquito, the spider, the midge)
Than in reality it is or will be at night.
The watching hawk
On the swing, the trusting baby rabbit
Playing in the yard — all too visible,
Your scarecrow meant to protect it

On the deck where carpenter bees drill holes,
As in the ground do chipmunks and moles.
Your upset flying series of rocks.
The great raptor in unhurried flight.
The upside down bat on the curtain that might
Have been hanging from a tree or a rafter
(And the finger puppet bat, which provoked
On my mother our daughter's first laughter).

Grey squirrels in their hundreds chasing
Each other around the trees, the snakes
Slithering too close until the shovel bit,
The deer we only see grazing off a parallel
Street, the coyote, the elusive bobcat, the fox
That run rarely seen across the nocturnal grass
And one memory that I've long put aside
Babies suckling, after the possum had died.

The ants that everywhere converge and swarm
Carrying their loads to their nest or searching
For food, solitary and vulnerable, soldier
Away from the fort, ready for ambush
And crickets and cicadas that only a storm
Will silence until their summer concertos and whirr
Fall to a cold decrescendo and the lingering hush
Of late autumn's fire and the burden they bring.
And the aerial, which no one ever evoked
In full among the many flying insects and fowl
But with a short list: harrying crows that squawk,
The light-catching bluebird and cardinal,
The turkeys in rows, butterflies, the owl
Like the hummingbird one hardly sees pass
(The night-hoot, the flower that shakes).
The blue jay, nuthatch, tufted titmouse,
Ruby-crowned kinglet, rufous-sided towhee,

The orioles I've only glimpsed on the wing,
The robin, the goldfinch, the chickadee
Who thinks our house is his house,
The sparrow, the swallow, the wren,
Especially the Carolinas that sing
A sustained liquid song when it's warm
In nesting season. Until at last the garden
In this gathering collage is hidden
By a flowing menagerie of form.

Herculean

These woods of dizzying heights are dangerous.
It doesn't take a strong windstorm, so be
Advised not to walk under the tallest oak
Or hickory when the branches are swaying wildly
Like grieving souls or maenads awaiting Bacchus.
Suddenly a large limb can fall through the leaves
In such clamor it seems that a fierce battle
Of vast dimensions has ensued and the fallen
Boughs as they hit the ground are the dying heaves
Of mythical beasts that devouring the cattle
Of the king were slain by hero or heroine.
Witness where each tall tree broke.
You'll see the silent evidence of a lack
Whose breaking once had made a greater crack.

Midday in the Sunroom

There are days when the artificial nature
Of human life becomes a burden,
A dormant season, a motionless house,
A silent window, when the balloon
Of the mind, apologies to Yeats,
Slowly and inevitably deflates
As it has today, impossible to begin,
Till suddenly at the painted birdhouse,
By the holly, a common wren hurled
Itself at a pileated woodpecker,
Hanging on and looking in,
A rapacious intruder at the door.
And when he would not be disturbed
A cardinal with a nest nearby
Dive-bombed as well.

It's as if a mouse
Rifled in the cupboard.
Or a branch dropped into a quiet lake.
Or unexpectedly a snake
Fell onto the basement floor,
Or without warning a church on high
Loudly pealed its bell,
Giving life to the abstract word
Like bird attacking bird.

Dreamtime



Photo: Sue Matheson

Alice-Catherine Jennings

Saint Beuvon de Provence

—After “Let’s Go Over It All Again” by James Fenton

Most knights are like that, at the sound of an ivory horn
off they go to hack heads, taint streams with blood.
I know this. But let’s go over it all again. Why would
a tender man, abandon his wife (maybe, I wasn’t enough?)
his baby son, his seven daughters? Did you not consider
the psychic damage? I heard you had a vision after you
found your brother dead among the daffodils, the poisoned
onions. Long enough have I been dwelling with those who
hate peace. Well, ye brek my hairt, you son-of-a-bitch.
Jerk! You didn’t even write me. I’d like to see you
this second but now you’ve been called to a cave to sleep
with your gospel. Listen, you could be here by a snug

fire, savoring the Daube de Boeuf Provence. I bet you
can smell the braised beef, the onion, the sage, the thyme

Saint Beuvon of Provence was a 10th century nobleman who helped to repel the invading Saracens. After a mystical experience in battle, he became a hermit and died on his way to Rome.

“Long enough have I been dwelling with those who hate peace” is from “Psalm 120,” *The Book of Psalms*.

“Saint Beuvon de Provence” borrows text and inspiration from the following sources:

Kircher, Mike. “St. Bobo, Patron Saint of Cool Names.” *Web Log Post. The Long Journey Into Light*. 13 Aug 2013.

Rudd, Mrs. “22 May—St. Bobo; Daube de Beouf Provencale,” *Web Log Post. Widow’s Weeds*. 22 May 2011.

The Song of Roland, Trans. W. S. Merwin. Modern Library, 2001.

An Easter Bestiary

The spine-covered hedgehog is a man bristling with sin not the prudent stork, a servant of God. Grey-purple in color, the crocodile is a poser.

At night it swims the water, stalks the land by day. When this reptile suffers hunger, it can make a mistake, munch a person. (Oops, it says, "This is not a gazelle.") The onager can turn dawn to dusk. A jealous devil, it will bite off the testicles of its newborn young. Elephant cows have no will to mate.

(With good reason, pregnancy keeps on for two years.) A smutty crank is the he-goat with eyes so full of lust, they look sideways. Satyrs with sweet faces and strange, restless gestures commonly sip wine & twirl lithe sylphs.

They are easy to catch but tough to keep alive. (Satyrs have zero to do with this story except that they are quite popular with poets.) In India, there is a beast called the leucrota. Big as an ass, its mouth stretches from ear to ear. Instead of

teeth, it has one ceaseless bone causing a constant smirk, like Louis the King's when he swapped a piece of pasture land for a nibble of the luscious liver.

(Now you know why the French eat foie gras today.) Such a feeble creature,

the mouse is doomed to seek the goods of others as its prey as its little liver grows only at full moon. Deer eat a minty herb whose round leaves are velvet.

If a deer swallows a snake and drinks of a fresh spring, its soul will be renewed

I send you a ghost

From “drop of blood” by Linda Vilhjálmsdóttir

Freki & Geri, the two

wolves, sit by the fire

as Othin dictates

his dinner of cold tubers,

herring & chokeberry

wine. His house is wide-

shining, free from

untensils unclean.

Freki is greedy.

When will the tooth

gift arrive?

The fire is hot.

Linda, the poetess,

knocks at my door.

Some Things Never Happen

Gleam offer of liquid,
naze of Napa gold
light of saffron—
a chardonnay, a nut-plant,
we battle the Benicia Bridge
(the crush at the toll booth).
The vibration of chant-
wood, the undreamt crash—
could your life burst like the sky
in “Starry Night on the Rhone”

by Van Gogh?

I want to wrap myself
in a magic cloak with a flute
of champagne. I want to corral time
before Grendel eats my insides
and you fail to slay the dragon.
You always say that you say—
the Berlin Wall falls and you
buy me that skirt of rough cloth.



Li Jiamei

Little brother

“*Jie*, his...*our* birthday party will begin at 4 p.m... don’t be late...” The murmurs of my cousin Xinyu on the phone floated into my ear.

“He” is her little brother. Xinyu’s parents always yearned for a second child, and six years ago, her mother was examined to be five months pregnant. They found many ways to identify the fetus’ gender—it was a girl. They abandoned her before she was born and said: “The huge fine of One-Child Policy make us do this”. Last year, her mother was found pregnant again and she gave birth to a boy by saying: “Universal Two-Child Policy allow us to do this”. The baby was born on August 1st, People’s Liberation Army Day, and the new family member got his nickname: “Junjun”, which means army. There is fifteen years and one day’s age gap between them—Xinyu’s birthday is exactly one day before his: July 31st. And from now on, the celebration of her birthday has been delayed for one day to Junjun’s. It’s not so bad, for at least she can get a share of the birthday cake decorated with her brother’s name.

My parents and I got to the party at three. Because of the scorching weather, the door was left open, and the aroma of stew ribs and fried pork cutlet lingered in the corridor, guiding us to Aunt and Uncle’s house: Grandpa and Grandma had arrived ahead of us and was busy preparing for dinner in the kitchen, beads of sweat sliding

down their foreheads; the snores of Uncle penetrated out of his bedroom door, making my hair bristle and bringing me shivers; Aunt was sinking into the soft sofa, watching TV with her son Junjun in between on her crossed legs; and in the small bedroom, my cousin Xinyu was frozen in front of the table, staring at a paper but as if not looking at it.



“Good afternoon!” Mum yelled at the door. When we were taking off our shoes to put on slippers, Aunt locked Junjun with her arms and struggled up to welcome us. My grandparents also heard us arriving and rushed out. Smiling but not looking at us, they took the presents in our hands and hurried back to the kitchen. Aunt held her son’s buttocks with right hand and straightened her back, making the little boy stand out, as if an Oscar Award winner standing on the stage with her dazzling statuette. Being exhibited in his mother’s arms, Junjun was scared to see our three unfamiliar faces and cried shrilly. So, Mum narrowed her eyes with eyebrows drawn together, and pressed close to the little guy with a greasy smile: “Oh my honey, why do you burst into tears? You don’t remember me? Please don’t cry, my sweetheart, I have brought you a lot of presents...” Dad took a bowl of strawberries out of the kitchen, and handed over one to him: “Don’t be afraid, Junjun, the sweet-sweet strawberries for you!” The little boy quieted down in front of the big, bright red strawberries. He rubbed away the streaming and sparkling snot on his mum’s shoulder, grasped the biggest one and stuffed it into his mouth, which made us three “strangers” sigh with relief.

Then I entered into Xinyu’s room and fished out a blue velvet box. She was still

motionless, keeping the pose of “The Thinker” statue.

“Happy birthday, Xinyu! Here is your belated present!” I put the box on her table, and noticed the test paper in front of her which was filled with bloody red crosses, “Are you OK? Has something happened?”

“Nothing serious. Thanks for your present, *Jie*.” She kept silent for a while and then asked me, “By the way, do you know how to get a bus card?”

“Yeah, but why? I thought your dad always drove you to school in car.”

She lowered her eyes, pretending to examine her fingernails: “He said that it takes too much time and money to pick me up.” Then she raised one eyebrow and cast a glance at her little brother who was surrounded by his “middle-aged fans”, saying: “Well, you know the reason.”

Her gloomy face reminded me of our childhood, when I still took Xinyu as my perfect enemy. As a daughter of my grandparents’ son, she stole away almost all families’ attentions and affections from me, as I had been given birth by my grandparents’ daughter. I hated her: I still remember the day when grandpa kicked her ass heavily because she poured water on the TV, and I just gazed at her with a smile, enjoying her shriek and cry. She also hated me, especially when I blandished the families again and again to beg for some love. But now, when Junjun broke into our life, the roles of Xinyu and me gradually paralleled, so we began to understand each other.

“Emm... don’t worry about the card, just leave it to me. Actually, the bus is better than...”

BANG!

Our conversation was interrupted by the thundering sound of a door opening. Uncle swaggered out of his bedroom and roared: “Oh, you have already come, I am so sorry to get up so late!”

The floor shook stronger and stronger until Uncle stopped in our room: “Hey, you two girls, why are you cooped up in here? Just go to the sitting room and play with your little brother!” He leaned on the shelf with his head up and arms crossing in front of his chest, just like a general who was checking the appearance of soldiers, although his hair was like a magpie’s nest. Therefore, I pulled Xinyu out and sat on the couch beside Aunt. Mum had been in kitchen to help with some housework, and my dad was still indulged in interacting with Junjun. The little birthday boy threw off all the shyness and fear, jumping up and down everywhere. Holding a big bowl of strawberries, Junjun may take himself as a fruit magnate and want to hand out his “property” to all of us. When he pushed a strawberry to Xinyu’s lower lip, she refused it expressionlessly, but this little boy mumbled and stamped his feet, with his hands keeping squeezing the strawberry in her mouth. She finally gripped it with her teeth, and Junjun cheered in a high voice and sprang to another room. Aunt was still switching channels and just like getting an electric shock, she stopped at a movie—Jackie Chan’s *Police Force*. She bounced up and pointed at the screen: “Xinyu, look at Jackie Chan’s nose! You see, it is really big and wide! What’s more, the tip of the nose is very fat! That is exactly the symbol of good fortune and great treasure, and you must marry a guy with a nose like this!” Xinyu was busy chewing the strawberry and she nodded speechlessly. Aunt appeared to be kindled by her theory of marriage, so she took my hand and patted it gently, teaching me in a whisper:

“Jiamei, earning money is not our duty. As a woman, the first important thing is choosing an excellent husband. But if you fail on it, then focus on the second important thing—giving birth to a boy.”

“Oh, I got it. That does make sense.” I took all my strength to unwrinkled my brows and compelled my facial muscles to design a perfect smile.

However, she had actually lived her own beliefs: before having a son, she was thrown to a small apartment with Uncle and their daughter Xinyu; though all the housework was loaded on her back, she was still unable to satisfy my grandparents, who complained about her laziness all the time; even Uncle’s love for her seemed to be gradually taken back, and he stayed less and less time at home. But now with son by her side, she exchanged the narrow room for my grandparents’ big house; she got rid of all the household duties, turning them over to her parents-in-law without hearing any grumbles; more importantly, she won back Uncle’s love and care because of her outstanding contribution to carrying on the family line...



“The dinner is ready!” Mum went out of the kitchen, out of breath.

Junjun was arranged in the central seat, like the moon circled by the stars. Mum took out a bundle of chopsticks and a pagoda of bowls; Grandma arranged the tableware; I poured drinks in all the cups; Dad buckled up the seat belt in front of Junjun; Aunt inserted a blue candle in the cake; Xinyu lit the candle. Then the room quieted down and all of us sat around the cake with our eyes fixed on the little boy, waiting for him patiently to blow the candle. Almost all of us were repeating the blowing movement,

expecting him to imitate us and end this ceremonious ceremony. It looked like that Junjun had comprehended what he ought to do, but he used an unusual way to finish his mission—he attacked the faint candle flame with spittle. After several rounds of saliva bombing, the candlelight was finally put out, with white foam interspersing throughout the cake. The piece of carrot dropped down from Mum’s chopsticks. Aunt froze her clapping hands. Grandpa and Uncle turned their eyes to the wall. Xinyu fixed her eyes to the dead candle...

“Wow... Wha...What a...What a clever boy! Junjun is so ingenious and creative in blowing the candle! He will grow up to a successful man in the future!” Dad broke the embarrassing silence.

“And I believe that my grandson’s saliva will give all of us good luck!” Grandma left her seat and kissed the boy’s face for more than half a minute.

I got a piece of cake stained with Junjun’s “good luck”. With a plastic fork, I secretly broke the tiny, huddling bubbles one by one, which were like the transparent eyes of dragonflies.

After enjoying the lucky cake, Mum pinched Junjun’s nose gently: “This little guy didn’t recognize us at the beginning. He must inherit his dad’s poor memory. Hahaha...” Then she turned to Uncle: “By the way, Tao, have you forgotten the money I lent you two years ago? Actually, I need it to renovate my house.”

“I’m so sorry, Sister, but I am still on a tight budget these days. I promise you that I will give you the money at the end of this year!” Uncle widened his mouth to his ears.

“But you have told me to...”

“That’s enough!” Grandpa said in a low voice, “Your brother has already got a big burden to take care of our Junjun, but you just make his burden heavier! If he can’t pay back your money, I will sell my house to repay you!”

Mum balled up her fists tightly, and she bit the lower lip so hard that it almost bled.



“Hey, Ha, Wa!”

Junjun grasped his spoon and waved it in rhythm, trying to regain our attentions. And the harmonious atmosphere resumed in a flash. Again, we put our focus on this little boy’s talents and intelligence. Mum turned around to take a deep breath and put on a smile again. To make up for her awkward situation, Mum threw out the topic she would never abandon: “My *son* recently got the title of ‘Excellent Student Leader’. The price was an exquisite watch and she just gave it to me.” She lifted her wrist, and the metal watchband reflected the lamplight to everyone’s face.

Mum was talking about me, her “son”. I really need to thank the fortune teller from which my parents ask for help, for he asserted that their unborn baby was bound to be a boy. I survived, they cried. Now they still stubbornly believe that I’m a boy, so as long as I can remember, I was given the nickname “Son”. Strangely, I just accept my fate to be a son: When I was a little girl, Dad taught me to play basketball and Chinese chess; Mum took me to the barbershop to cut off my long hair. In every day’s dinner, they always talk about good news of their colleagues’ sons and look at me with overwhelming hope. For nearly twenty years, I have struggled to live up to their expectancy, because only in this way can I shape myself from a “Pinocchio” to their

real child.

“Sweetie, you are so outstanding! Junjun should learn from you, but not his useless sister.” Aunt put a pork trotter in my bowl. I hated pork trotter. Some hairs weren’t completely pulled out, standing on the pigskin, which was just like the jaw of an untidy man. I tore down the sticky skin from the trotter with my teeth and sent it into my throat. When I swallowed it, my gut just seemed to be scratched by a sparrow’s paw.

Aunt gave an oblique look at Xinyu and continued: “Xinyu failed in physics exam again.”

“There isn’t a quiet learning environment for me to focus on my study.” Xinyu raised her head, and her face was flushed, “And I really need a tutor to solve my doubts on physics.”

Grandma put down the chopsticks heavily on the table: “Oh my dear Xinyu, you think Junjun has influenced your study? Indeed, he makes a little bit noise sometimes, but he is just an innocent kid, so why can’t you love your little brother as we do?”

“And why other students can just get high marks without any help? Why wasting money on these NEEDLESS stuffs when you can solve the problem by your own efforts?” Uncle glared at her.

Xinyu’s voice was trembling and weakened: “Bu...but I just can’t understand the knowledge points by myself...”

“So you should have chosen liberal arts as I have told you before. Now you face difficulties in study, and it’s your problem, not ours. Don’t attribute your failure to

Junjun and your lack of tutor.” Uncle shrugged and invited Grandpa to join in a toast.

When dividing art and science classes after the first term of the senior high school, Aunt and Uncle had ordered Xinyu to study liberal arts because they were convinced that a girl studying science wouldn’t be attractive to successful men. But she loved science so much that she had finally followed her heart. Because of her “immature decision”, Aunt hadn’t talked to her for two weeks.

Lowering her head, Xinyu loosed her chopsticks quietly and left the table. Her favorite candied sweet potatoes were still untouched in the bowl.



“Look! Our little guy is reaching the glass!”

“No, it’s so dangerous!”

“Oh, you little naughty boy!”



The absence of Xinyu was covered by other’s care for her little brother. It seemed that the taste of today’s dinner wasn’t so good as it had used to be.

As soon as the tortuous dinner was over, I tiptoed to Xinyu’s bedroom and checked if she was OK. Her body seemed to be melting on the bed, with her right forearm withering on her forehead. The sun set and the hue of her room turned from orange to gloomy blue. She was being nibbled by the darkness. On her face, the bloodshot and swollen eyes seemed like the pulp of overripe peach filled with red fibers.

I put the bowl on her table: “Xinyu, I bring your favorite food. Take some or you

will be hungry at night.”

There’s no reply. She just gazed at the grey ceiling, like she could look through it.

“Don’t be mad at them. They didn’t intend to hurt you.” I sat beside her closely, hoping to absorb her pain like a sponge. “I can find a tutor for you, just as my investment on your study...”

“No, I’m good. I can handle it myself. Now please leave me alone.” She closed her eyes slowly, and a tear drop slid over her temple.

I left the room and closed the door gingerly, for fear of shattering her cracked heart. When I dragged my feet to the sitting room, the strong light pierced my eyes. Everything was in harmony—For Grandpa, Grandma, Dad, Mum, Uncle and Aunt, their hearts and souls were all immersed in the happiness of the new hope, and all of them maintained so cheerful that they chose to forget the conflicts and unpleasure of each other. Therefore, it was Junjun that reunited that family, while at the same time, it was Junjun that isolated Xinyu out of the family...

On the way home, Mum, Dad and I stopped in front of a red light. Lowering my head casually in the drizzle, I saw an earthworm desperately twisting her body, trying to wriggle back to her safe and warm earth. But what she headed for was the tough and muddy road, with streams of traffic rushing to and fro. I bent down and tried to help this helpless creature, but the traffic light suddenly turned green and Mum dragged me to cross the road. I looked back again and again and the stubborn, vulnerable shadow was still struggling at the edge of death, fading away little by little from my sight.

Sunset Foxgloves



Photo: Sue Matheson

Amy Tziporah Karp

What I Am Trying to Say

I never thought we were like them. I didn't know then how loud the ghosts would speak, how they would perch themselves on my parents backs and dig their claws in, pushing my mothers head down, weakening my fathers shoulders until he stood hunched, protecting his heart, his chest having cracked open to sustain life.

We were taught only to hear the living, the survival worth more than the deaths.

Now, the empty depression of suburban early years seems sinister, I find their stories everywhere, hiding in closets, sitting next to me on planes, as I race to find cousins, strewn across this earth just before the fire came and consumed those left behind.

Inheritance, Part I

It is that we walk the night together
numbers fabricated with fine plastics and metals
becoming letters etched in untouchable ink
there is solace, awake beyond human hours
to find these strange markings.

While others sleep with abandon
my brother takes pills to slow
the chattering thoughts
swallowing the images
we've imbibed and stored
for later when the subconscious
bubbles with our exiled and weary
who burned for us so we may
lie bleary-eyed at night
in countries with no memory.

Inheritance, Part II

One day we will vanish, like all other tribes of people melted into the fabric of history. This, I wish for those who have come after me, a day free of metaphor, grand distortion, symbolic of more than one fragile body can contain. One day we will be like other descendants, shaking our heads at the small possibility of genetics being passed down. Nothing more and nothing less than, human.

There are traces of who she was, the person that was emerging, not surviving long enough to leave the nest. There were traces and I'd been waiting. She and I had been speaking about ghosts for so long.

All it takes is one accident to sever the line from one generation to the next. All these lost generations howling in the thickening wind, the oncoming storm of unexpected snow in late October. When will they no longer be audible? Somewhere, in that language, I've been sifting, unable to sit still long enough with the caving, as if to stop is to become buried there, where I was standing when we both left, at last.

All the sadness melds into itself. How now might I distinguish between what is mine and what has been theirs? After all, together, does it not become the same? There are the sensations, the emotions, the sometimes snapshots captured and handed down. There is the fist in the stomach, the sudden loss of oxygen, the incredible magnitude of the universe.

Skin Moving Against Skin

Cracking the chest open, again, searching for the fleshy parts of myself drunken with desire, like those nights, dark Brooklyn streets where I found the parts of myself I had been denied as a child.

You, cold, put on my coat, fake fur collar, becoming Travolta to my zaftig. I squeeze myself into your jacket, fabric made for girls like boys, stretching itself into burlesque, porn.

You're a diva you say in the cold and you are squeezing my hand, laughing, delighting, both, in this lens with which you had always seen me.

How long has it been since I've seen your vision? I have not yet extended myself empathy. I still wait for letters that will never come. There is a starkness to all of the beginnings and endings of one lifetime. With speed, moving, until alone, there is only wilderness.

Tell me a story and I will tell you a story. I have given too many stories away for free, never imagining the prices to be paid for transparency. I no longer bother with concerns of authenticity. What you have told me, in a certain light, is true.

I found myself closing my eyes, allowing the rhythm to pull me, to seduce me away from thoughts of future disasters, of lives torn by torture, the terror of what they saw and what I could not explain through tongue to palate, or skin moving against skin Tell me a story, you ask. And we begin.

Moveable Feast



Photo: Sue Matheson

Rupert Loydell

OFF TO THE FUTURE

‘Take away his camera and he’ll draw on
his eyeballs with a felt-tip pen.’

Iain Sinclair, *The Last London*

Compulsion and a flying heart. Nothing
will go away, nothing stays the same.
He is behind the curve or ahead of
the game, never quite where he wants
to be. How very sad, how lovely, how
does he manage to cope? Picture this:
animal tracks and bone, black glass,
Sunday morning childhoods. Gone
or tidied up. Memory fades away,

the past is open to interpretation.

The darkness falls as flowers do,
wilting in the light; although we are
earthbound we can’t wait to get away.

Don’t make me choose, don’t make me
explain or err on the side of caution.

I need to see, to undo the damage
and find out everything for myself.

We can argue about the secrets
of the past but I am looking forward,
ready to go yet full of regrets.

Hold my hand and we are off
to the future, walking sideways
and dodging our own reasons
as well as the camera’s flash,
mumbling damaged prayers.

ABOUT THE SKY

I have mirrored your accident
and fallen up the stairs, fallen off
the map. I am mostly in hiding
from imagined enemies and critics
of my own devising. You know
how it is: these thoughts arise
and worm their way in, quickly
becoming facts. Everyone is a poet
now and if they are not they borrow
texts and call them their own,
or sing and dance, seek fame
and a public any way they can.
One learns to tire of audiences
and withdraw, preferring to mail
pamphlets to a group of friends,

as though it were still the seventies.
Back then shops were independent
and sometimes sold small books
on sale or return (usually the latter).

We found our feet underground
and watched as business knocked
us over, told us that our poems
would never sell. Then poetry was
the new rock & roll, then it went
online. Everyone's become a critic
and an expert but no-one wants
to read or think about their work.
Everything is in the moment,
everything is now, then gone.
There's dust on all my books
and people don't believe I can

have possibly read them all.

Today I'm flat on my back,

wondering how I might

write about the sky.

PAGE 129

I wondered if he had known the copy of the book he'd sent, dedicated and signed, was damaged. Several pages were creased from the printing process, others had bled ink onto the poems opposite. I was still glad to have it, to be able to read the series as a whole. Reading it in the bath, I managed to wrinkle the book's edges in the steam and start to delaminate the cover. Later, I found a bloodstain from my cut finger on page 129.

The book draws on other texts, juxtaposed images, stories and ideas alluding to elsewhere: the reader leaves the written text and thinks herself away, puzzling over the tesserae offered to her. Is it possible to make or intuit a whole or must it always be perceived as fragments and disparate ideas which appear to move towards but never achieve cohesion?

It is a cold night, the heating has turned itself on, the cat is asleep on the end of the bed. A friend did not email me for several weeks, so concerned was he by the word 'theology' in the title of a poem I dedicated to him. He asked me to remove his name and then ceased communication. Recently we resumed our correspondence. 'What is grace?' he asked, and we threw around ideas of states of being, acceptance, living in the moment, being gifted faith.

We might call theology philosophy he suggested, and I concurred. We should not assume theology is to do with organized religion or dogma, I wrote, it may be ontological, social or political (small p). Like everything, it changes and evolves. We touched upon that, also, how to square evolution and belief, science and faith, society and aspiration, writing, art and teaching.

The poems, or letters as the book title suggests, are full of momentary narratives, paraphrase, events observed and enacted. Each has equal weight, each is as carefully constructed and evoked. Themes are written around, a poetry of absence, a theology of absence, that unnerving concept of inversion and the negative, describing what cannot be known by engaging with what it is not.

Skeins of blue and soft black marks. A distant conversation underneath the village streetlight, an owl's call in the garden. Precious words on cheap paper, documenting the holy and unknown.

And now he is in love and has left the city behind.

ANOTHER DARK TOMORROW

'I am writing to you from depression, from a body
of black cloud through which a bird's shadow passes,
like a knife.'

Bhanu Kapil, *Humanimal*

Sometimes the lights at the end
of the tunnel are out, the sound
switched off. Reflection is just
a reflection, or something coming.

Every tomorrow is a kind of quiet
as friends I've upset drift away,
tired of my anxiety and worry.
The way out stays elsewhere,

the winner is as distant as ever,
the winter is here. I am clinging
to black thoughts, as dark as
discontent, with no reason to be.

All I can think of is cloud although
it is sunny everywhere around me.
Why anxiety or depression, stress?
Each and every day is just as dark:

I can find the music but tomorrow
the silence hurts. Ask someone else
before filtered grey light or arctic night
surfaces in my panic and finds me

beyond the shadows I have hidden in.
Words and paint bewitched by despair,

BROKEN DAYS

‘My voice repels death; my death; your death; my voice is my other. I write and you are
not dead. The other is safe if I write.’

– Hélène Cixous, *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*

SLEEPWALKING

We’d like to peek at what’s beyond, but nothing’s there, so we dance our way to the back
of the queue and hope our names will not be called. I didn’t get where I am today by
being dead, but I will be dead when I get to wherever I am going. A time machine might
take us back to where we came from but in the future we’ll be forgotten saints turned to
dust. All that was yesterday, now there are new liturgies of shouts, hollers and howls, and
a makeshift lean-to heaven.

Invisible connections, white starline song, sounds from another world

SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS

Ask your mother and see what she says, ask your father and find out if he agrees. There will always be a shadow in the house where others used to live. The cat avoids these places, and dust is settled there; time stands still or moves more slowly and it is hard to work out why. Your name is nearly all that's left apart from an awkward portrait on the wall and some poems I wrote at the time. Death is out of reach of explanation when it comes to worry and acceptance, rarely at the forefront of our minds unless we're ill. We second guess ourselves and ignore sensible advice, march on towards our end.

Dirty fingernails, over-ripe fruit, dreams we used to share

DEAR FATHER

All I have is what I can remember, and what I can remember isn't much at all. The years pass and my photo of you on the windowsill fades. The back garden at home is still small, but the apple tree has gone and the fence has been replaced, the alleyway is gated, and the neighbours have built a big extension. By the tube station there are new tower blocks for students, built where factories used to stand. We passed them on the way to school, which has also been demolished. No-one can take memories away but I have mislaid mine all on my own.

Yesterday, today, tomorrow, the spaces in between

ANOTHER SIDE OF THE SKY

I am the moments you never had, the time after you died, and you are still wherever you are, shimmering in imagined light. It has been a while, body and shadow no longer adhere to the rules of our abandoned world and we have tried to mend the broken days without you. When there is no sun it is often dark and night is here to stay: it is all too clear no-one is home. Backyard memories are all I have, cycling round the park and playing on the swings. Recent photographs of you and me are empty, each one blurred, underexposed.

Silence is twice as long backwards, singing makes it even worse

BEFORE YOU GO

Before you go, turn out the light and reassure us we will be okay. Please explain how it feels to die and what you hope we can achieve. Tell us how to remember you, whether you want celebratory fireworks or distressed cries and tears. Hold our hands and help us understand, direct us in our loss and grief. Would you like fresh flowers on your grave or prefer us to live with ashes in a dusty urn? Should we mention your name out loud or pretend you never were? Stop going out and shrivel up or make new friends out there? Here comes our future now, just as you turn into the past.

Sky dance, dark forest echoes, aftertaste of old

ELUSIVE

You are building your own coffin and mapping out the future, the way the whole thing ends, and what wonderland will be. Are you ready for another country, to stop facing your tomorrows? Do you have questions for the angels and a back-up plan if not? It feels as if you might be vanishing. Where the sun touches the water and the sky turns darker blue is as likely to be home as here. The clouds went that way, the sun another; high winds are forecast for tomorrow. All my spells are broken and you are nowhere to be found.

Agnostic bliss, nothing but words, no time after meaning

SUNSHINE BOY

There are moments I forget you aren't and start to write a letter or to call. You're still in my address book and smiling at the end of that concert video, but there is always rain and thunder to remind me you will not be arriving any time soon. Our friendship was tried and tested, there were no reasons left to give: we just turned up, turned out, as and when required. Now, I know that no-one's there, and we are both always alone. In your absence I try and measure the length of wind, count the stars and watch the prescribed burn.

Summer tears, fever shot, anger too far gone

TROUBLED CHILD

Strangers beside me, every step of the way; I am going nowhere and so, it seems, are they.
Over my shoulder, the eternal present echoes through the canyon. I was a photograph
but my smile isn't needed any more. I hope tomorrow is like today, do come downstairs
and say hello. This is no way to get to heaven, is how it feels to have a broken heart before
I wake up dead. I know this is my fade out but I am turning it right up loud. Listen out
for me: silence will do the rest.

Ancestral meditation, groove machine, the beginning of the end

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

I was with you all summer, but will not be now. I have moved into the house of shadows
and whirlwinds, ready to take my place in the dancing mist. I have someone else's blues
and an adventure I do not want. Let my grave be a frozen field where I can listen to songs
made by birds and trees. It is the lonely time: someone here is missing and I suspect it's
me.

Open door, moss houses, forgotten estuary

BEWILDERED

It should have happened a long time ago, but I was busy cheating myself out of the end game. I dream all morning and dance all night, sleep to avoid the strange perfume of day. What have I to lose? An ocean of fear, shipwrecked songs, and yesterday's desire. I can't bear to think about how I must be my own understudy for the rest of the beautiful now.

Burning bridges, final score, the way you look tonight

LOVELESS PRAYERS

I spit into the river and listen to the silence of the muddy bank. I am trapped in three dimensions, an early morning sweat before the sun arrives, have forgotten what living is for and how to find my own way home. All the answers have gone and I have said my goodbye; I am stranded in sunrise and the tide is going out. Days like these, nothing matters. The charred fragments of later flutter in the breeze.

Field report, four minute warning, a silver-grey reprise

OUTGOING

The spirit of death is a serpent's kiss: so many tired old people waiting to rest. When he came home from the funeral he had had enough, was ready to move out. He abandoned a house full of memories and possessions and moved into a room. Mourning is a broken record, repeating over and over. He never went home again, simply rehearsed life in the dark while he was supposed to be asleep.

Pale electric light, house of cards, pray the soul away

GOLEM

Night fades softly and then it is dark. Tools of the imagination are put away and the cabinet safely locked. The stranger at the table speaks under my breath, puts music through the silence. I am waiting for the morning to see what I have made. The full version is only just coming to light, the creature wants to be found. Where you are is always your world; where I am is known as despair. Dying is a continuous process, there may be no end to this.

Story book, mud monster, many moons ago

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

I have known myself for many years now, don't like what I see. But in the past I played team sports and used public transport, have first-hand knowledge of love and pain. It's a mixed blessing, being wide awake in winter when the nights close in, but better than forever waiting. I have made music for the future and become nostalgic for the past. I have current or recent experience, and nothing more to say. Don't hesitate to contact me if you need to know anything more. In the meantime, I commend myself to you, I'm sure I'll fit in fine.

Last words, surrogate pleading, discontinued line

Tyger tyger....



Photo: Sue Matheson

Robert Luce

Bellona and Her Village

Sucked from their bodies.
Invaders were able to
Run through the Fundi warriors
Like they were not even there.
Many men died and many more
Were wounded in feeble attempts
To protect their homes. For the
First time in their history,
Invaders entered the main
Circle of the village.
Houses were invaded,
Women dragged out, children
Crying. The shrieks and sobs could

Be heard for a half day's ride
Away. This continued until
Men entered the house of
Five year old Bellona.
Two men entered. Shouting was
Heard. Silence. The invading
Army gathered around the
House, but all refused to
Enter, waiting in silence
For someone to come out.
At last someone did exit
The house. It was Bellona,
Carrying a sword, covered
In blood, her eyes blazing red.
Blood dripped from her dark skin
And down from her hair. It was
Said that on that day she was
More red than black. The invaders

Were frozen at the sight of
The girl. The men were petrified,
Not from fear, but something was
Holding them. Bellona then,
Single handedly, hacked an
Entire army to death,
While they stood frozen, defenseless.
The women and children, who
Had been drug from their homes, stood
And watched in horror as
Bellona butchered dozens of
Men before their eyes. The town
Was grateful to Bellona
For saving them, but they felt
More. Men emasculated,
Feeling they no longer had
The ability to protect
What they loved. The women were

Disgusted by the display
Of excessive violence.
The town talked about what else
Could have been done and considered
If she was more evil than
The invaders. Still, they
Honored her, for a time,
Mostly due to fear. In the
End, it was the decaying land
That brought up her strange ways
Again. They considered if
She was the reason for the
Bad luck. She began to strike out
At villagers she had known her
Whole life. The borders began
To slowly close again.
Only the memory of
Bellona kept them at bay.

The village was puzzled.
Even those who thought her to blame
For the hardships understood
Her value in protecting
Them from foreign invaders.
By age seven, Bellona
Would ride a bay steed and
Patrol the borders. She was
A sight to see aboard this
Huge animal. You probably
Assume she was a vibrant
Seven year old considering
Her power, but you would be wrong.
As soon as you are born,
You begin to die.
However, for Bellona
This took on a special
Significance. She seemed to

Age five days for every one
And when she used her powers
In battle, she would wither
Right in front of your eyes.
Her body was frail, her hair
Was already turning grey,
And the lightning nightmares were
Getting worse. She still had
Powerful eyes, but her body
Was dying rapidly. An
Assembly of elders was
Called to devise a plan of
Action to deal with Bellona.
Discussion moved from cursing her,
To praising and blessing her,
But most agreed she was a curse
And a blessing. They decided
To consult the oracle

To determine what to do
With Bellona. Much haste was
Made to reach the oracle
Because Bellona was growing
More feeble physically
And the borders were under
Constant attack. For the Fundi,
The oracle is reserved
For decisions or questions
Which cannot be resolved
By the elders. Bellona
Fit this description. The elders
Asked what could be done to relieve
The curse which plagued their land
And what should be done with
Bellona. They feared for
Her health but also that she might
Someday destroy them with her

Power. The oracle is
Housed in a purple and gold
Temple, set on top of a hill,
Three days journey from the village.
The three leading elders took
The trek in hopes that they might
Save the village and Bellona,
But if only one was
Possible, then the village
Took precedence. The oracle
Was a young virgin girl
With skin and eyes as black as night.
The devotees asked their questions
Regarding the village
And Bellona, then waited
Patiently for the answers.
The oracle sat silent.
They wondered if she heard them.

They were afraid to speak
Amongst themselves but each wondered
If the questions should not be
Repeated. Was she even
Alive? She simply stared
Forward as if in a trance.
Then, without warning, she began
To speak very rapidly,
As if prodded by a stick.
The oracle spewed, "Bellona,
And consequently your village,
Is dying. In order to save
One you must save the other.
Bellona must allow the
Community to save her
And the community must
Accept Bellona's help
In order to do so."

The elders were dejected.
A riddle! The village is
Dying and all they had was a
Riddle to solve the problem.
The eldest asked the oracle
What could be done to bring about
This resolution. Once again
The girl was in a trance.
It seemed as if they had the
Only answer she was willing
To provide, but just as they were
About to give up hope,
She came to life again,
"Bellona must be sent away
To learn the art of making quilts
Of life and war from the gods.
This is the only cure
For her numbness and madness,

Which is coming from her
Stifled creativity.”
The elders continued
To ask questions, “Where was
Bellona to be sent?”
“How was she to learn?” “What did
The oracle mean by quilts?”
There was no response and it
Was clear she had said all
She intended. In all
Honesty, the elders
Received more information
Than they expected or hoped.
So, they began the long,
Silent journey home, each
Absorbed in thoughts of Bellona
And the village. Upon
Arrival they called a formal

Meeting of all the elders.
The three sojourners repeated
What the oracle said.
Then the problem. They had no
Idea where to send the girl
And moreover they feared
What would happen if word
Got out she was gone. Upon
Voicing these concerns, they were
Given the news; Bellona
Had been gone for two days
And no one knew where.
I have heard many rumors
As to where she went
During her absence
Every land, it seems, claims
She visited them and holds
An artifact as proof.

It seems impossible though
That she could have traveled
The entire known world
In the two years she was gone.
In addition to artifacts,
Many lands have stories
About the Great Bellona
Who visited their lands.
Some claimed she could fly,
Others that she could walk through walls,
And others that she could
Even travel between realms.
When Bellona returned,
She found that not much had changed
In Fundis. Crops were still poor,
Rain was still scarce, and invasion
Seemed once again imminent.
The people, on the other hand,

Noticed something different
About Bellona. She was
Still intimidating, but
Somehow less menacing,
More approachable.
Immediately upon
Her return, she threw the blacksmith
Out of his house and took over
The operation. Two weeks
After her return, Bellona
Held an assembly for the
Entire village. Everyone
Turned out to see what she had
To say because this was
Unprecedented. Bellona
Never had much to say
In private, much less for a
Public audience. Everyone

Was gathered, crowded so close
Together that spreading their lungs
To breathe was an effort.
Bellona made her way to
The front, positioning
Herself and a huge bundle
On the stage usually
Reserved for village news.
This was definitely news. The
Eyes of the villagers moved from
Bellona to the bundle.
She looked at the crowd, ostensibly
Looking everyone in the eye,
Then she unwrapped the bundle,
Removing the most finely
Crafted and intricately
Adorned agricultural
Tools for which any had seen or

Even heard of. The people would
Soon find that each was sturdy,
Yet light, relieving the
Back pain of a hard day's work
Through touch. One piece of equipment
In particular caught many eyes,
A dazzling silver plow,
Which was completely covered
With the scene of a feast.
As the village took turns
Examining it, they each
Saw themselves somewhere in the
Scene. So detailed were these
Images that their very expressions
Were evident. At the head
Of the table sat Bellona
Herself, next to her was a man
From the outskirts of town,

And they were holding hands.
On each of their laps was a child
With a large grin. In the middle
Of the table, a local is
Carving a bird. The detail
Of the image is so fine
That on the blade can be seen
A great hunt, presumably
Where the bird was captured.
Behind the feast table,
Three men are dragging a stag
Back from the hunt. On their quivers,
A scene of a doe and
Her baby is depicted.
Days after the people
Began to use these tools,
Rain came. Bellona spent her
Time creating and creating.

The more tools she made, the more
It rained. Bellona did not
Just create tools, she also made
The finest weapons in Fundis
Or any land. The most
Balanced swords, the strongest spears,
The truest arrows. Like the
Agricultural tools, these
Weapons depicted some of
The most beautiful scenes of
Battle, life, and nature
Ever seen on any
Tapestry in the world.
Men would rather give up
Their life than lose a weapon
Made by Bellona. This
Seldom happened though, because
Warriors wielding her

Weapons possessed outwardly
Boundless energy, incredible
Strength, and amazing good fortune.
From this moment on, Fundis'
Main village was never taken
In battle again. The Fundi
Pushed back the limits of their
Borders, which have now been constant
For generations. As for
Bellona, her health began
To return after she
Became the tools and weapons
Maker. Her hair regained its
Beautiful black color and
Muscle and fat hid the bones
That was once her particular To this day, she continues
To be part of the council
Of elders, creates tools

And weapons of the finest
Quality, and looks after
Generations of her
Children's children.
Physical quality. She
Never lost her powerful gaze,
But people were no longer
Afraid of her as they once were,
Unless of course they gave her cause
To be angry with them.
In fact, she became the woman
People went to for advice,
Which was so valued that she
Was the first woman added
To the Fundis council
Of elders. She was married
And had six children, though sadly
She has outlived them all.



David Margoshes

Advertisements for ourselves

“Her breasts no larger than mine...”

The first line from a poem called

“Marilyn” by dee Hobsbawn-Smith

We go out into the world in the bodies we inhabit, advertisements for ourselves. Passing a mirror, you might pause, startled by the unexpected stare back of a stranger, the person you once were, the person you might have become, even the person you might already be, still growing into yourself, your future undetermined. You might be a woman with breasts smaller than you'd like or larger than you think they should be. You see the eyes of men on you and even those of other women, judging, comparing, finding fault. Flipping through a magazine, you find

photos of a great beauty long dead and are surprised to see her breasts little different than yours. But when you mention this to your friends, there is laughter, whether at the brazenness of your boast or in the shock of recognition, you cannot say. Is it the costumes she wore, the photographer's art or the sleight of hand of the movies that makes her appear so much more than she was, you, in the naked light of day, so much less? Or the sumptuousness of her lips that creates an illusion we are all too ready to accept? Live fast, leave a beautiful corpse, she did that. You walk out into the world, shoulders back, feeling the daily decay, the bewildering passage of time, the ripening.

Birthday

I was born on a day in July, my father liked to say, when the birds ceased their singing, held their breath, gathered in silent flocks on the highest branches the better to see, a day when the rickety earth seemed to pause on its axis and even the activity of angels in heaven came to an abrupt stop, as if to note the occurrence of something extraordinary, my father said. But no, I protested, I was an ordinary child, third and last child to my loving parents, first son with two sceptical sisters to reckon with, born on an ordinary day in the all-too-ordinary month of July, but, agreed, in an extraordinary year, when there was war to contend with, war and fear and a shifting along fault lines, but still, an ordinary child born to an ordinary family, the start of an ordinary life, nothing for birds

to concern themselves with, let alone angels. But
no, my father insisted, the sky held its breath that day,
pulling the air out of his own lungs. I was there,
he said, I saw it.

Overexposed

A shy painting,
hung in a place where everyone
passing by can't help but see it,
must bite its lip and soon get
accustomed to new light.
Emboldened, its blushes
are replaced by the bristling red
of anticipation, then the ocre
of complacent hesitation, finally
the rust of disappointment,
faces turning away. So quickly
what we least desire
becomes habit, then burden, finally
a belief almost beyond belief,
disgrace.

New York City summer

Bottles rattles their bones in the alley,
a tomcat syncopation as pleasing to the ear
as a Brubeck break into five/four time,
that dazzling left hand. Garbage trucks
hum their own tune, an off-key melody
patched together from scraps. The song
of the city rises with the tincan perfume,
the heat of the day before still holding us
like a child with an injured bird cupped
in her hand. Soon enough that hand will close,
choking us, sending us out onto the fire escape,
the roof, the sizzling street, seeking solace,
cool glance of the passer-by. All day long,
sun's white-hot poker, all night long,
the long slow hiss.



Brian MacKinnon

after i read

after i read
the final words
after coming back through
the wilderness with the kid

through the glimmer...where
the old man waited,
deck of cards
the scarred
and battered
table'
in the late
Richard Wagmese's

Medicine Walk

i caught my breath
and pulled
the novel
and its entire world
to my heart
and embraced
it

(in seventy reading years)
I'd never
done
that
before



Christopher Moylan

Love

And what of love?
The new thing,
Prepositioned,
longed for,
propositioned,
warmed to,
predicated,
whispered for
called, inwords
forenouns,
foldnouns,
soft, siftward
the soothe of it
on the fingertips,
tip of the watchword

spelled out
tongue wards...
nownouns
dropped
like earrings...
the thing of it
Uncolored,
Rainclouds un-
Grammared,
Breathheld;
the evening weight
between the eyes,
gone, as
silence is,
finger on the key
everything
befored, pre-hurt,
treaty-ed,

longing pierced
every birth
gospelled like
water over sand
you are this
and only this
you are only
sleepish
intimate

Pat

1. Telling Stories

The coast was late in arriving
For that sudden sunset,
so we invented a new far away,
beautiful, well preserved,
like a bible newly translated
from a long winter's sleep.

2. Last Breaths

What did we expect? a paper
airplane gliding like a gloved
finger over dust...a conclusion
comforting, almost inaudible
amidst the date palms

And ghosts in the varnish...

3. Anticipation

Sadness so evening kitchen,
so dirty dishes and ice chips,
so twist-off bottle of Ginger Ale...
clouds gathering kindling
from what's left of the treeline
to burn what's left of sleep...
Regrets and disappointments...
Everything addled, a bit
Off kilter, too bright and
too dark at the same time...
All the windows thrown open,
Flocks of heron, egrets come through.
Pills and crumpled napkins,

breakfast crumbs, newspapers
Baking in the oven... Pat telling
stories that don't fit together;
words come first, then the puzzle,
then the empty spaces.

4. Last Day

And on television an old man
Talking to an empty chair, other
Old men bobbing like cut bait
For Leviathan to clear the air...
This is Florida. I can't wait
To get out of here...
A few families on Bonita Beach
Paralyzed by the sun. Stillness
Everywhere. Within the stillness,

A slight rise and fall on the bay
That pulls freighters into the haze.
Does God read my mind?
Maybe, maybe not.
Pat has only a few days.
and I am content to sit here,
mind empty, more or less,
no memories, no lists, no tasks,
just stillness and sand.
God reads my mind.

Occupy the Air

Flocks of tamed pigeons
float from a tunnel painted
on the mountainside,
Boulders push their bellies
into the morning light, pear
trees ride the tall grass...
Out on the bay, icebergs drag
their skirts in the summer haze.
Houses slip inch by inch into
the sea as if afraid of the cold.
Occasional breezes stir
The ash and soot falling
In clouds from the east
Somewhere and when they do
The sunlight spotlights
A fellow stepped off the cliff's

Edge, his legs churning mid-air—
no forward progress, no sudden drop...
Bullets stop at eye-level,
Red clouds pause overhead,
He walks on, not looking
Down, pushing his weight
Into the emptiness that suspends
Him. Pigeons watch with the blank
tranquility of sleep as another
and another steps off, as if
the air beneath their feet held
not space or force or grim
prospects but another kind of
obvious, something worth
the risk of losing , while
others rest... What does it take
to step off the cliff's edge
when so much is falling:

houses dropping, towns
crashing, companies vanishing,
countries sinking in a red sea,
A loud noise sends the flocks
Flying back into the painted dark,
A sudden storm shreds the paper
World, but those who occupy
The edge, the free air, and
The horizon beyond are not
Birds but women, men.
When will they come down?
Maybe soon, maybe never.
Maybe it doesn't really matter
So long as they persist,
Keep at it, keep going,
Not look up, not look down,
But ahead, taking to air,
everywhere.

Early Winter in the Valley

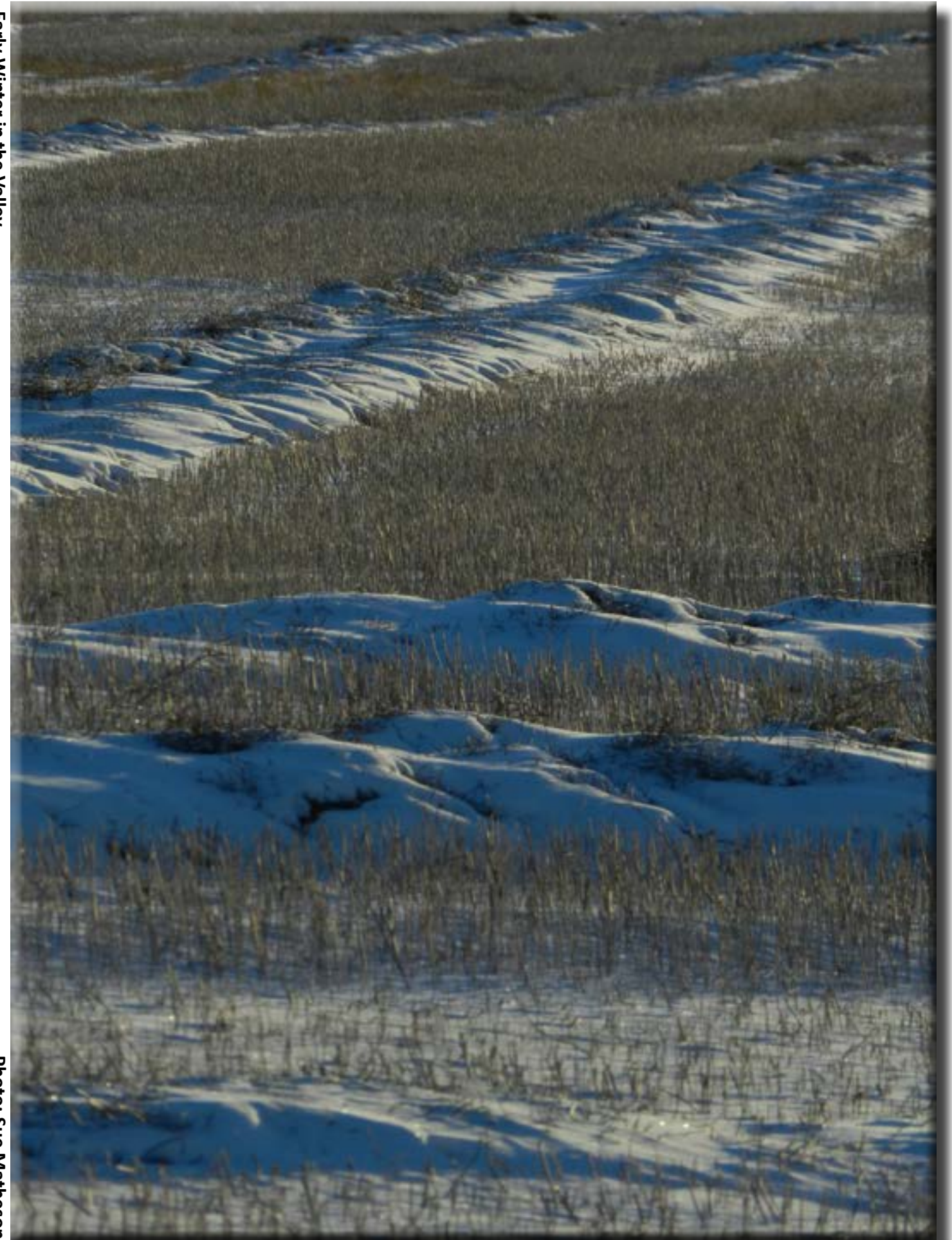


Photo: Sue Matheson

Joanna Munholland

Not Waving But

I crossed the bridge today,
From town to reserve.
Red strips of cloth are tied to the railings
Honouring, noticing, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
And the little red strips
Thrown up by the wind seemed as arms
Not waving but drowning,
Freezing,
Bleeding.
Red everywhere,
Like the last rays of sun spilled on the Earth.
A woman disappeared soon after I arrived here.
Still gone two years later,

Whenever she is mentioned rumours swirl
And are gone again as the conversation moves on.
The river always running.
Alone in death and disappearance
They are later surrounded by the faces of so many sisters
On websites and
Documentaries and
Faded posters on street corners and
News broadcasts and
Presentations to the public and
Grief.
And together the chorus of waving arms
Calls out their mute cry,
Directed by the wind
Flying freely over frozen water
Running still.

Aunt Johanne

I had a great great aunt,

Aunt Johanne.

She was the youngest of two boys and four girls

Born many years ago in Norway.

Ole

Martin

Ågot

Julia

Dorothea

Johanne

Her brothers came to America.

Ole first,

Through Ellis Island, eventually on to Canada;

And Martin too, staying in America.

Both brothers started new lives, married, and had families.

Both brothers were living an adventure.

Johanne told her parents,

“I want to go too,

To see a new world, a new place, be with my brothers.

Have my own adventure.”

And they said,

“No.

“No, you must stay and look after us.

You are the youngest, after all.”

Her parents died;

First her father,

Then her mother.

Johanne said, “Now I will go, I am not too old,”

And her sisters said,
“No,
No, you must stay and take care of us.
You are the youngest, after all.”

None of the sisters ever married.
I never heard if Ågot ever loved, but
There is a story that Julia fell in love with a divorced man.
She was discouraged or forbade to marry him by her father.
Dorothea, an officer with the Salvation Army,
Was dedicated to her work -
I don't know if she ever found someone special;
However, he would have had to be an officer of the church,
A requirement.
I don't know about Johanne but

I wonder if she pinned her hope on America
Or Canada
To find love, a lover, a partner.
And then she never got to go.
Slowly, “I'm not too old” becomes
“I am too old.” And I see love passing her by,
Another ship sailing away
Taking something else away from her.
The boarding time just missed,
The ticket never actually bought.

The sisters would check their mail each day
And if there was nothing, they would say,
“Ingen post,” or, “No mail.”
The refrain was the saddest thing in the world
When your closest family is across an ocean and
The ones left behind are getting old.

Eventually, I wonder if Johanne's dreams dried up as
Time left her little but gravestones to talk to and
Long awaited letters to read for company.
A few visits over but it was always back to Norway.
Or did she smile to hear the stories of her relatives
And imagine herself with them?
Until finally she was buried in the land of her ancestors;
As anchored in death as she was in life.
Who was there to care for her when she finally died?

She who had lived her life at the behest of others.
She who had remained to care for everyone else when they were old.
When she became old herself,
Who was there?
The injustice burns my soul
And her life haunts me.

I am named partly for her.
A woman who died before I was born.
A woman whom I never knew
Except through stories from my mother, my aunt.
Through the few things I have that were hers -
Necklaces, a painting, a photograph, coffee spoons from 1927.

I hope in some way she was happy,
Knowing her brothers and their families -
Nieces and nephew and their children
And their children's children -
Could find and live their dreams in the new land.

I am twenty-seven and single,
Childless.
I am pining for adventure,
Watching and waiting for my ship to come in,

“Sexual Harassment - A Sonnet”

No matter where I am, it seems to go
Along, an ever possible shadow.
Blackness always threatening to flow
Upon me. Words, whistles, kisses. I know
You say I should appreciate the noise;
“Oh, Jo, you know girls like that,” But I
Don't. Not in rooms dark or light, men or boys,
Busy streets or empty paths. Doors closed tight.
But how to avoid it? Pointless, don't try.
It is a locked box with no key, plainness
No protection, golden haired siren. My
Femininity sanctioning notice.
Because of form I am yours, regardless
Of choice, voice, knowledge, desire, or yes.

Ice Garden



Photo: Rebecca Matheson

Léna Remy-Kovach

HUNGER

I hold your language in my pocket,
she wears your feathers in her hair;
their feet on your land –

our feet on your land.

No(w)where do we go?

green	card	and
black	snake	with
white	skin	on
red	path	but

it's not like I know
anything.

The Windigo devours –your people –my people.
He digests the wind
and leaves us with no colors.
Only snow.

At The Bustop



Photo: Sue Matheson

Margaret Shaw-MacKinnon

Intervening Angels

May, 1937

“Did you read them?” Tom Wintermute, a middle-aged farmer in a worn Sunday suit, leaned forward on a plain metal chair, elbows on his knees, hat clasped between his hands. He addressed his son, Johnny, who was propped up on pillows in a hospital bed in the Pembina Hills Sanatorium near Ninette, Manitoba. On his previous visit, a good three weeks prior, he’d given his son a book and an old yellowed clipping to read. The clipping was out of The London Evening News in 1914, a story called “The Bowmen” by Arthur Machen. The accompanying book was *On the Side of the Angels: The Story of the Angels at Mons: An Answer to “The Bowmen”* by Harold Begbie.

Tom knew “The Bowmen” was a story to inspire any young lad, about angels intervening on the side of the English in the Great War in the Battle of Mons. For a young reader, such as Johnny, the accompanying book was another matter altogether. In a queer turn of events, the author Arthur Machen had published “The Bowmen” as a fiction, but it turned out that numerous soldiers had, in fact, seen angels at Mons. Machen tried to argue that the story he’d written was pure invention, but across England in the churches

and in the streets, uproar arose, claiming the angels truly had been seen.

Begbie’s book attempted to prove the soldier’s accounts of angels were true. He suggested that Machen, the author, had written “The Bowmen” through telepathic communication with dying soldiers who had seen the angels, a great mystery to be sure. Had Tom done the wrong thing by putting before his sick thirteen-year-old son such a controversial report? What had his son made of the book?

“I read them.” His face was pale, haloed by a mess of dark hair, a frown line etched between boyish blue eyes. He thought “The Bowmen” was all right, but he enjoyed egbie’s book more than anything he’d ever read, a book of new science, showing how all the universe was connected and that the minds of men could reach anywhere through elepathy.

Johnny knew this was true, being a twin. He and Tommy often read each other’s minds, finished each other’s thoughts and sentences. He wished he could have given egbie his own hundreds of examples of telepathy to beef up his book, the countless times they started to talk of the same matter at the same time; the time when they were our years old, when Tommy got lost in the wild west crowd at the Polo Park horse races, so he, Johnny, took their father’s hand and zigzagged through the crowd to the place where Tommy stood marveling over a Coca Cola billboard of a dark-haired rosy-cheeked lady in a blue gingham apron who bore an uncanny resemblance to a carefree version of heir mother, leaning back in a chair, pop bottle in hand; or the time he was about to pound the corner of the barn where an escaped bull from a neighboring farm was tearing at and munching their hay, and sensing danger without seeing it, Tommy threw out his arm to stop Johnny from moving forward, whispering, “Wait!” He saved the two of them from

being gored to death like their poor dog, Rover, who scooted onward into the path of the bull whose owners aptly named Destruction.

To be sure, Johnny had been riveted by all the accounts of soldiers with their bloody wounds and their astonishing visions. But it disturbed him that his father had given him such a book when he was ill, a book all about angels and ghosts and death. Johnny had no intention of dying. “What I want to know is why you asked me to read them.”

Tom twisted his hat, and then untwisted it to pat it back into shape. He hadn't expected such a direct question. What should he tell him? That he feared Johnny might die? That back in the Old Country, death by consumption had been common enough amongst the folk of his village, and more common in those who went to work in the factories? That his young Uncle Bertram, a bachelor who taught him his ABCs and how to row a boat and make a wily snare, had wasted away just like Johnny, until he coughed blood and died? That if worse came to worst, he wanted his son to die with a sense of hope, like so many others had done in the Great War because of what was in that book?

Johnny's future was precarious, most certainly, but whatever the outcome, Tom knew the time was right to talk big ideas with a son who's had to grow up too quickly. The loss of his sister, Charlotte. A life-threatening illness. Johnny was an entirely different lad than he'd been a year before. As scrawny as he was, he frightened Tom; he was like a wise old man. Tom cleared his throat. “Well, I wanted you to know something about me that I never told anyone, except your mother.”

Johnny leaned sidewise towards his father, feebly propping himself up on an elbow, fire in his gaunt face. “What? Were you there, at the Battle of Mons?”

“I was. And...” He would exaggerate, as he'd planned, to give comfort. “I saw the angels.”

“You saw the angels!” Johnny plunked back onto the pillow, staring up at the ceiling.

He repeated quietly almost to himself. “My own father was at Mons and saw the angels.”

He picked up the book and looked at the cover, at the title, *On the Side of the Angels*, and at the two robed and winged angels, their swords held high, each blade crossing the other to create a holy arch over the book title. Johnny knew his father would never lie to him. He was a God-fearing man. So, everything in the book was true, just as the author, Mr. Begbie argued. The book, published in 1915, was one of the few his father had brought over from England, and it had been innocently tucked in the little bookcase in their Manitoba farmhouse for years. Johnny had at times looked with interest at the cover, never quite curious enough to open the book, and here, all the while, it contained within it a world of wonders. In his unutterably boring life in the San, he had avidly read the mysterious document. “Father, it's so strange.”

“The events were strange. May I have the book so I can read you the part that has special meaning for me?” Johnny handed his father the small volume. Tom thumbed through the pages, landing on one on which he'd turned down the page corner many long years before. “Do you remember the part about the nurse, Miss Campbell, who was called to the side of a wounded Englishman?”

“My favorite part!” said Johnny. “Except that her name is the same as our teacher

at school. Our Miss Campbell is a battle-axe.”

“Same name but a different person,” winked Tom, who thought she was a battle-axe too. “Let me read the passage to you,” Tom Wintermute continued. ““He was propped in a corner, his left arm tied up in a peasant woman’s head kerchief, and his head newly bandaged. He should have been in a state of collapse from loss of blood, for his tattered uniform was soaked and caked in blood, and his face paper-white under the dirt of conflict...’ (64-65). Then, you’ll recall, the soldier asked Miss Campbell for a medal of St. George.”

“Did you see soldiers in that condition, Father?” Johnny coughed into his blanket, all the while keeping his eyes on his father. He had never dared to ask his father anything about the war. Children knew. The men wouldn’t talk to anyone who wasn’t there. The war worked away on the men, making them turn crazy and mean at the slightest provocation, but the war tied their tongues. Now, suddenly, his father had created an opening, as if they were man to man.

“I saw worse,” said Tom. “I was at the Front, in and out of the trenches, fighting for four years, son. I won’t say more, but I saw worse. Broke my heart, breaks me still. Now, what it is, about that young man, is that I likely knew him. I have my suspicions that he was a lad called Jack Manning who died. You see, I might have known the dying boy in the book because I was a Lancashire Fusilier, just like him.”

“You were?”

“I was.”

Johnny took in the news with a raspy whistle.

Tom continued. “The cottage I grew up in was near a village called Banks, Lancashire, beautiful a countryside as you could find, a place dreamt up by the Sea, we always said. But there was more hardship than beauty in that life. You’ve no idea, really, what it was like, eight people in one room, a cow in the attached byre, to keep us warm in the wet chill of winter, no proper windows, the stink of humans and animals and the bitter smoke from peat in the hearth, the riot of noise. Oh, we had our moments, singing and dancing, or as children, playing with alleys—marbles to you, or fishing or hunting songbirds with a catapult for the womenfolk to cook into a pie.”

Johnny grimaced. “What songbirds?”

“Sparrows, robins, finches. Aye, we were poor enough to rescue our hunger with those tiny morsels, while the squire who owned the land grew fat. I was a slave to the garden and later the field.” His voice lowered, and he looked at his old shoes on the scrubbed linoleum. “When I was one-and-twenty, I found my father dead in the field, his ale barrel drained beside him. I might well have carried on that dismal life, but the Great War started and I seized the opportunity to join the Lancashire Fusiliers for pay.

That’s how I ended up in Mons.”

Johnny had never heard his father share so much. His father was a closed man, miserly about revealing personal history. “None of your damn business!” was his common retort. And now—Banks, Lancashire. A place dreamt up by the Sea, as if the Sea could dream. Johnny felt as if a rare bird had flown into the room; he was afraid if he moved the wrong way, startled it, it would be gone.

“Can I read the next part?” Johnny spoke with a passion his father hadn’t heard in

so long. Tom put the book into Johnny's thin hands. Johnny looked at his father and said, "Do you know, I read this part out loud when I was reading the book. If the nurses were outside the door, they must have thought I'd gone off my rocker. But I wanted to hear the soldier's voice, his way of speaking. It's funny."

"Funny!" exclaimed Tom. "It's pure poetry, it is!"

"That's it!" said Johnny. "Poetry. Here goes. 'We all saw it. First there was a sort of a yellow mist like, sort of risin' before the Germans as they come to the top of the hill, ome on like a solid wall they did—springing out of the earth just solid, no end to 'em. I just give up. No use fighting the whole German race, thinks I; it's all up with us.'"

"And so it was—all up with us!" stated Tom.

Johnny continued. "The next minute comes this funny cloud of light, and when it clears off there's a tall man with yellow hair in golden armour, on a white horse, holding his sword up, and his mouth open as if he was saying, 'Come on, boys! I'll put the kybosh on the devils.' Sort of 'This is my picnic' expression. Then, before you could say knife, the Germans had turned and we were after them, fighting like ninety. We had a few scores to

settle, Sister, and we fair settled them (56)."

Johnny put down the book. "I would never have believed it, if I hadn't read the whole book, all the men's stories. Dying men, men with nothing to lose, and no reason to lie. What did you see, Father?"

The truth was that Tom hadn't seen anything but he was dead certain that others had. But to convince his son of God's intervention, he knew he had to pretend that he'd seen something too. Tom told the white lie he'd cooked up at home, the lie that

even he almost believed after he'd practiced it so many times to tell Johnny. "When I said, 'I saw the angels,' well, I didn't see them like that fellow did. I didn't see the figure of Saint George—or Saint Michael, as the French did. I didn't see the three great and winged beings that some saw. But I saw the Light." Tom's eyes filled. Even if he hadn't seen anything, he'd felt God's presence along with the rest. "It's as all the accounts say. There was Something that came between us and them. Our men were exhausted and outnumbered. There is no way we could have survived if that Something hadn't helped us."

"You didn't see angels up there. Just a Light."

"That's so. No actual angels. But I felt the Holy Presence, the same as the rest. I have no doubt."

"I don't think I'd see angels either," decided Johnny. Since the disappearance of his sister, Charlotte, he'd called to her spirit, begging her to appear to him and she hadn't come once. He knew Charlotte. She'd come if she could. So, he couldn't decide if she hadn't appeared because God wouldn't let her or because ghosts weren't real or because she was still alive. He hoped she was still alive. "No, no angels for me."

"Maybe not. Maybe not. But you'd feel the Presence." Tom added, "I've thought it over, why one would see this and another that. I'm a practical man, a farmer, a nonsense man. I can hardly imagine an angel, let alone see one. Some of the other boys, they were poets, they were. They were painters. They were fine-bred gentlemen with finebred ideas. But, you see, it doesn't matter what each of us saw. We were all in it together. We all had the strange unearthly feeling, and so did the Germans. Even their horses went skittish,

turned, and galloped off. Why, it's as if we were all inside God's head. Something said, 'Stop.' And we stopped."

"I believe you, Father," said Johnny. "It makes sense. Why wouldn't God help the English? They were in the right."

"Perhaps," said Tom, catapulted into a long-standing quandary. That innocent explanation wasn't one he believed. God didn't defend those who deserved to be defended. How many times had he prayed, as a child, that God stop his father when the drunken rages and beatings began? Sometimes, in his adult own life, he'd beaten his wife Jean when she didn't deserve it—though most times she did—and hadn't she asked God to stop him to no avail? Where was his daughter, Charlotte, who'd been gone for a year?

Why was Johnny fighting for his life? God wasn't fair. God didn't reward the good. No, Job was the truest book in the Bible. But at Mons, God stepped in. God just wanted both sides to stop fighting. Tom looked at Johnny. He'd tell him, whether he understood or not. "Johnny, I don't know that God was favoring the English over the Germans. We soldiers were all hard done by, by arm-chair Generals. I think God didn't approve of the Great War. He'd had enough."

"If I were God, I wouldn't let bad things happen," said Johnny. He wouldn't let boys get T.B., for one thing. For another, he wouldn't let sisters disappear. He wouldn't let fathers beat mothers. God's world was out of control, a darkness always welling up to overwhelm people. Sometimes people were at fault, but mostly, God's world was not a safe place.

"Ah, well. God started us off in the Garden of Eden," said Tom. "But we weren't

eady for Paradise." He didn't want to preach to his son right then, but if Johnny got worse, he might die. Then he'd have to meet his Maker. "We must each get ready for Paradise."

Johnny sighed. He wanted to stay close to his father, but the mysterious bird was gone from the room. Was his father getting ready for Paradise? Was anybody? His father hadn't told him about his past to encourage him to live; he'd told him about it in case he died. Johnny wasn't interested in dying. He wanted to live, to figure out how to improve things right here on earth, if God wasn't interested in the task. "I'm not going to die, Father," Johnny said with the defiant anger of the perilously ill. "I'm not planning to see God or any angels any time soon."

"That's my boy," said Tom, in a voice rough with feelings undisclosed. There, he'd done it. If his son had to leave the world too soon, like Tom's young friends unfairly and outrageously blown to bits in the bloody muck at Mons, he'd think of their talk and be comforted by angels as he went.



Brennan Thomas

Crystal

graduation day

June when moonshine lights up paths

shadows back porches

pushed out in summer

dog days when only scattered

stars can tell our fates

sitting on black rust

benches at Frost-Eze, eating

soft pizza, cheese picked

first Christmas alone

thawed turkey dinner so mom

makes a decent meal
could you try finding
something else? be someone else?
better? be sly? fox.

badger marking time
two years harder softer steps
just can't crystalize

Bluejay



Photo: Sue Matheson

Bill Tremblay

Living Wet in Yakima

Crickets divide darkness and the gray man
with moustache hunched in a pickup
outside his double-wide

Close on left cheek small crucifix tattoo
twitching like a scorpion visible by kitchen
light streaming out window

him taking sips, watching his wife across
pea-stone lawn washing dishes. By day she
makes up motel bedrooms

to cover mortgage in sync with the mi corazones

in corridas on his radio making
heroes of contrabandistas

with tree-frogs grace-noting suriana subtexts
to this man whose bad history
with the Michoacán police

and a 50-year-old's shoulder pain sweating
whether to gun the dealer who beat his
daughter nearly to death

so like his life he cranks the volume as lyrics
dig Aquilante's grave in the sands of *el rio*
where his brother has put him,

no one can say that he's weak. Conde pounds
the wheel once, pulling the Mexican tri-color

with eagle and serpent

down from its perch on the sunshade, snapping
its shaft, pulling the key from the ignition,
shoulders open his door

as the song dies into pine needles, trudges up
flagstone to tell his wife he loves her too much
to spend the rest of his life

in prison. She says she'll tell los vecinos their daughter
walked into a door, which none will believe, yet none
will speak of ... out of respect.

DE CHICICO'S THE EVIL GENIUS OF KINGS MELTS DALI'S LE GRAND MASTURBATEUR

Once the glyphs are free from slavery to
hammer and chisel, the ridiculous spike of self-crucifixion,
the hand unable to nail itself, the globe caught in mid-moment
between "like" and "as" the hexagonal column surmounted by antennae
or an apple sprouting eyes on stalks achieving attention

then they sprout legs and get into the action
whose seeds they carry to the core, and expel an army
green 1948 Ford coupe in pursuit of a beautiful backside white
cranking its knob into the vanishing diaphanous
gown before it, clear prophetic signage straight to the skull.
An upright building beyond that.

The artist has frozen a conceptual slice on just what is

PANIC BREATHING

the evil genius of kings who leave such obvious clues,
the luminescence, the blade of lime, the props of Babylon,
the slab of marble with the head of an arctic seal,
base desires, all instinct, no brain brought into collision with
the liminal literal, the refusal of “like,” your biggest enemy
your own mass at play in the fields of gravity.

Who knows when they will release though the pull is constant
to fall, the tumbling crash into crushing wedges of stone cutting
the chest open, ripping out the heart in an ejaculatory arc.

He jerks upright in bed,
eyes twin lakes emptying down his cheeks.
He stares at Angelica’s sheer nightgown lit by
lightning mirrored off garden fronds. She sits up,
holding a breath in paranormal vacuum hush.
He tells her it was his father, his eyes half-veiled,
his mouth sealed with tar.

Angelica holds him
as she says that sometimes the dead play charades.
David fumbles a cigarette out of a pack on the night stand
remembering the name over the cathedral door.
—Your mother’s name, she says, snapping on a lamp,
startled by a new canvas on a bedroom easel.

She notes the man in the painting has no eyes.

—Why have eyes if we don't want to see

how we have been chewed and eaten by machines

of our own making? Or ears if we don't want to hear it

grind our souls? Or a nose to smell when we know

the air's corruption? Or a mouth when to open it

to forfeit our lives?

She says he sounds like some Cassandra,

but he's not predicting, he's projecting a current image,

though through the Mexican time-machine it's the same as

Moctezuma not listening to Cuahtémoc tell him

that Cortés is no god but just another pirate who'll steal

everything that makes them human,

but the stamina to outlast exile in their own home

on their pilgrimage back to who they once were.

He looks in the dresser mirror, his eyes

the blood-shot glyphs of nightmare. His brain's

in a baked cocoanut shell, his mind a lightless

closet of ghosts sealed in by dried mud.

What are her chances to post an article on the rally?

— Nobody wants to hear it, she says.

The man. In your painting. What's he begging for?

—He doesn't know he's dead. He thinks there's still

a meeting at Party headquarters to plan a protest.

Angelica hopes he won't argue with Contreras again.

—What I'd like to tell him is, no more meetings!

Let me do my work.

Lightning flashes again on wet garden palmettos

David feels cut open by the dream,

mumbling, mumbling something to Angelica

about adding a new passage to his memoirs,
pulling on paint-speckled pants, turtleneck.

Angelica moans:—I'm not your slave.

I need my sleep if I'm going to get through tomorrow.

—We can sleep when the struggle is over.

—I'm as committed as you are!

She fishes out paper and pen, dresser as desk

as he begins to gather steam about his boyhood.

—People ask how old I was when I first read Marx.

My answer is, I didn't get my politics from a book.

Angelica scribbles, then pauses, placing head on forearm.

David takes pen from hand, notebook from table, writes:

Pancho and I, eleven, sit on the fence watching

Don Antonio's trainer work the young bull

with cape and sword, observing whether he leads

with right or left horn. Pancho says he's sorry

my grandfather died. I'm sorry about his brother

whipped to death by Don Reynaldo Arellano.

He says he'll remember his brother when he ends up

in some skirmish in the wished-for revolution dead

like a bull in the arena, his tail tossed to a senorita

by some elegant killer in a pinche spangled suit and

punto shoes. We hear the chug-chug sputter of a Stanley

Steamer approaching Don Antonio's hacienda. I tell

him the trick to survival is always to be unpredictable.

And to know which side you're on, he adds. I'm on

your side, I say. He asks who's that rich man in the car?

My father, I confess. Come to take you home? I say

my home, no matter where I am, is always with you.

ELECTRICIANS' UNION BUILDING

Two coiled serpentine staircases
pull all eyes up to steel power stanchions
to ethereal plasma of auroral rainbow waves
pulsing from factory smokestack radio towers
the siren song of salt and servitude,
clanging the sun disk with a funeral drum-beat
drub-drub, drub-drub
above the Temple of Justice consumed in fire.
Soldiers in gas masks holding rifles
herd human hosts into a blue-oiled screw shaft,
the painting a bitter pun that crushes
men, women into gold coins,
the ultimate and perpetual *reductio* splashing out
to the invisible Elect who receive the eagle's bounty.
His steps clack marble. Mural spooks haunt each step.

Luis' cigar stub chides him in waggles for being late.

He clammers up platform bamboo triangles.

—Salazar picked me up again.

Snatching up his spray-gun, connecting pneumatic hose,
flipping on switch, modeling black eagle wings
in plasmotechnic glow from *el norte*
spreading its talons, keeping its prey panicked
easy pickings.

Luis chews his stub with some chagrin,

a little hang-dog that David promised him the eagle.

—I want an *industrial* eagle, he says,

an eagle whose feathers can slice flesh, whose claws

can keep an entire continent a bandit-ridden hell-hole.

Luis stubs out his cigar.—I looked for you

at the farm collective meeting last night in Xochimilco.

A beggar-woman enters the hall, carrying a crying infant.

She turns her head up and back at the mural

spits on tiled floor.

—I can't be everywhere, he says, regarding the woman
on the bottom stair breast-feeding. The baby stops crying.

He wants to paint her glistening nipples

able to feed Mexican farmers the milk of justice.

Luis's voice climbs into the sound vacuum.

—The Bank of Commerce is foreclosing on them.

The web he uses to keep his bull in check

breaks. He slams the spray-gun down, tears off

his apron, un-nozzles, rushes out bronze doors, past

boarded-up bookstores, tourist junkshops,

alleys of homeless living off restaurant garbage.

Stooping to pick up a loose pavement brick

he enters the Bank of Commerce, leans over a dowager.

—How can you put your money in a bank

that forecloses on farmers who've toiled for five hundred years?

The woman looks up at him: —*Don't hurt me!*

—I don't want to hurt you. Just answer my question.

—*Help!* Two bank guards rush over, pistols drawn.

—*He's got a brick!* In a flash he's on the marbled floor,
guns at his head.

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Tyler A. Turcotte

NORTHERN INTERFACE

For Buddett

Apé, boy. Pee-toin? Drink? I want to tell you about my first impression of your people and home. I must give the place feeling before I leave. I hope you won't resent me now that I'm leaving. I truly am grateful that your people, the Swampy Cree of Burnt Cross Lake welcomed me so soon after my arrival. I have to admit I was a little nervous when I first got here. It was not the murdered and missing signs on the highway coming into the territory, nor was it the habits of the people, it was that damn baseball game.

That day is a clear picture in my mind still. There was no liquor left after the hair of the dog that bit that morning when I staggered towards the knocking at my door. My renaissance was over and the Maritimes were behind me. I scrambled to find clothes and ash a cigarette before peering through the blinds to see who was knock-knocking on white man's door. I did not know what I was then, but you all knew. I came from the highway. I was an outsider. I opened my door to my first Swampy woman:

"Hello-"

"*Tansi*, are you the new teacher?" "I think so".

“Do you play whip pitch?” “I’ve played baseball before”.

“Ok, we need you right away, *astum*”.

I hoped the game would be like beer league slow pitch games back on the river. After a short drive up the dirt road, I followed her into the ball diamond and its surrounding parking dirt, pulled in, and when I did I was so distracted by the scenery I did not see her lips pointing to a parking place. I was looking at the crowd of you guys sitting, standing, everywhere. I slowed to a stop on the dirt to look on some 600, eh? More than half you guys anyway.

It was a brown apparition of fabric and flesh, of earth and trees, of water and air, and the entire world was tangled up in it. Behold the northern interface, I thought, first contact and all its glory. I got out of my truck and could tell word had spread about a new white player at the diamond. A man standing by the dugout holding a red jersey was waving me over so I ran to him,

“Tansi boy, get dressed, we need you right away, we up one run, our right fielder right hurt he is. There one more up to bat. We shut down this inning, it’s over. Two outs. Bases loaded. No pressure, white man.”

He laughed by outstretching his tongue to his chin, like this, tilting his head back and said, “nee”. I felt the pressure from the crowd. I said I played baseball, I never said I was a baseball player. Across my chest read *Braves* in bold white. I was tossed a glove and told to take right field so that the game could continue. An easy win I’m sure they thought.

I jogged out to right field and turned to face the batter. Looking across the field I

saw the mass of the community, but through the crowd of mumbling men and laughing women the sound that stood out the most were dogs barking on the dirt road next to the field. I squinted to get a better look at the males mauling each other in the dust. I could hear Nanabush, Wisageejack, the Witigoo, Glooscap, the ravens and the coyotes all barking at me.

The volume of the crowd brought the game back into focus, my great cause. Then it occurred to me that I could be tortured and executed as though it were a public carnival if I fucked up the game. While I swam in fears and fantasies of being acculturated, assimilated, being blown, and brutally murdered as the hero... I heard the ting. It was the ting of a bat on ball for the ages. The crowd went silent as the ball soared into the air. I saw it in the quiet of the sky and thought, “this is it, not only have I participated, I have contributed; I can be the revolutionary leader, the idealist I dreamed of, I can be carried out of here on the shoulders of the people with a dove on my shoulder,” but before I could finish the thought I stepped in too close and misread the ball. It grazed the top of my glove... barely touching the surface... and fell to the ground.

As I stood there in right field, a frozen idiot looking down on the ball at my feet, I felt all my idealism of working on the reserve crash down on me. Rather than think of the next step I could only fixate on the problem. I was deaf. I was blind. Dumb. Numb like I am now, brother. That scene comes from the darkness of my memory and into focus often: the leaves of grass; a shouting crowd, the center fielder cursing at me as he sprints in my direction for the ball; cursing at me in English and Cree as he stoops to grab the ball. He turns to throw it to home plate but it’s too late.

I lost you guys that game. Just another white disappointment to the swampy Cree. You guys are used to it, nee. It is no wonder that was the only one I ever played on the reserve. I could not face you then. I did not look to see if anyone was looking at me and I did not understand the language to hear the insults from the bleachers because public school did not want me too. I did not want to. I left the dug-out got into my truck and drove back to my temporary dwelling on the other side of the reservation. Of course, you know where the story goes from here, another white disappointment for the Swampy Cree.

Farewell. *Ekosani Jamis.*

Dead End Rez

Woodland Cree territory, Alberta, Canada.

Highway 58 will take you to a Woodland Cree reservation. You go all the way to the end of the highway and keep going. Two hundred kilometers of dirt road through the bush. Whether you can use this god forsaken dirt stretch to get out to the Woodland reservation depends entirely on the weather. Even Dylan could not have done this stretch of dirt justice with a song. The end of the highway opens onto a small airstrip and dirt roads linking rotting shacks taken by black mold and neglect. Shacks with drunken structure, slanting and leaning walls that have housed generations of families. The Cree of this community call it all home. It is possible that some of the people living here today are directly related to the first nomads to cross over from Asia into North America by way of the Bering land bridge. They, like their contemporary relatives, have found no reason to leave. There is no incentive to leave, and if they do leave, they find only reasons to come back.

The past winter of work seemed different for the *mooniw* couple. There was tension added to the dryness of the air. Arthur tried to leave his work at the school even when it found him at home. Sometimes it came as little children's hands knocking at the door asking for food, other times it came kicking in the door for whiskey because of whiskey and residential school trauma. There were days when it felt like an honorable

service and others when he wanted to wake up somewhere else. Unlike when he first started into this line of work, when it was a great matter, he was now thinking of alternative career paths. New work prospects were the product of idle thinking. Today was one of those days where he wished he had woken up somewhere else. His wife was up and had already left for the school. Arthur rolled around in his bed trying through the hang-over to remember how many sick days he had remaining. There was just enough time to get up and go through the morning ritual.

He made his coffee and drank it quickly before dressing and getting ready to go outdoors. As he stood fidgeting the key into place it slipped from his fingers. It passed through the holes in the floor boards and fell into the snow underneath the porch. It was a risk leaving the door unlocked, but he hadn't the time to find the key in the snow before the bell. It would have to wait until the end of the school day. He stepped back into the house for a moment, paused, then exited again. He motioned as though he were locking the door with a key in case any of the Cree were watching him in the storm. He pulled the door tight and started his walk to the school.

The month of January seemed to be perpetually without color. Only the pale light of the moon that gave everything a dreadful air helped him see on his walk to work. After the school bell he would return home through the beaten trail the same way. Shadows and shapes of faceless figures and forms swirled in blowing snow. Arthur trembled at the sight of a frozen puppy. He stepped over the mutt and could see its eyes had glazed over with frosty death. This was all normal to him now. The problem was that normal was getting worse. He knew from habit which way went the rabbit. One trail that led

to another intertwining to all ends of the reserve: this one to Loonskin's camp, that one to Wapoose's trap line, there to John Dor's memorial band hall. In front of him was the outline of snow shoe tracks freshly blown over with snow. Whoever was walking in front must have just missed him at the start of the trails.

Past the clearing the snowshoe tracks were hardly covered. He might have caught up to the better equipped early riser who was walking the same trails if he walked faster in his boots. A wavering figure outlined itself in the blowing snow before him in the distance entering the school. Perhaps symbolically enough Arthur first saw his face reflected in the window of the main doors. Our hero entered the school and removed his pigmentation of winter. He stepped into a puddle of water soaking his sock feet. He went into the office to punch his time card, "Tansi," he said to the receptionist. Down the high school wing of the building was his class room. There were no students in the building due to the cold weather.

As he passed the classroom of one of his colleagues there was an outburst of laughter. He looked in as he passed and saw his colleague talking to a stranger, the very stranger he saw reflected in the window moments before. He had his back to the doorway and his snowshoes were leaning against the door dripping water onto the hallway floor. To Arthur they represented the stranger's preparedness for the northern interface.

Arthur kept himself occupied when the students did not come in. It was only the outside staff that came into the school on snow days. The locals were home in their beds while the school froze over and the mooniows froze with it. The headlines on the national

broadcast blurred fact and fiction. There was time to plan the rest of the year in these eight hours. Most of it was entertainment, managing behavior and what not. His wife came into his doorway. Yes, he had met the new teacher, he lied. The optimism? Yes, he noticed. Yes, he did have lots of ideas, big Ideas. Yes, he spoke Cree. Yes, it was funny that his name was Arthur as well. What were the odds. She told him there was going to be a staff meeting before everyone went to lunch then she left his class.

Arthur went to the office to make copies for the next week. It was a Thursday and there wasn't much else to do. In the office one could pick up on bits and fragments of all sorts of conversations in Cree and English. Arthur heard a colleague say there was a substantial number of methamphetamines in the community. "One dealer brought in pounds of some powder that's getting them all high. Someone needs to get killed before the band invites the RCMP to fly the flag, and it will take one of us dying before things change. There is just nothing for these young people to do but think about killing the outsiders that are here to help. Time for me to get out, time for me to go..."

In another fragment by the coffee machine Arthur heard the new teacher say he was a lifer. The people here would be his life sentence. He was fully committed to the Cree. He did not struggle with the appropriate emotions fitting the reserve, new colleagues, and a new home. He would work for the kids and their parents. Arthur poured his second glass of coffee and chewed away at a cherry turnover taking it all in. He listened to the idealism of the new teacher and his plan to speak to the kids about Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont. He overheard some of his radical ideas like the use of canoes to blow up hydro-electric dams. The new Arthur wanted to speak to them of revolutionaries and

domestic terrorism. He wanted to preach about educated action, he wanted to create big change while being the big change. He fancied himself a visionary who could create a new Jerusalem for the Cree people over the prairies somewhere. Foolishness, Arthur thought as he stood sipping his coffee. Who do you think you are? The locals were eating it all up. It's absurd, Arthur thought, the Cree needed to change themselves, they did not need a new Jerusalem, they needed to sober up. Enough culture, culture took them here, culture was normal, and the problem with normal is that it gets worse.

His wife would stay to volunteer extra time coaching at the school whereas Arthur left with the bell. He knew leaving the keys underneath his door to freeze or be found was foolish. He hoped the recent snowfall deterred anyone from a search for them. In the network of paths and trails that made up the difference between the school and their shack the snow was heavy and deep. Arthur was wading through the darkness when he saw fresh snowshoe tracks for the second time that day. He made his way over and followed trail. When he reached his house, he found the door open with snow drifting into the entryway. In the chair sat his namesake.

The door had not been kicked in, it was opened by key or was never closed when he left. Now Arthur wasn't sure. He put his bag down on the floor, and heard "How she going? Door was open, I let myself in and had a lil' sit down. Tired. Real tired, let's have a say, boy". He stood up from the chair and extended a hand.

After a while they looked like perfect twins of each other sitting there communicating experiences about the reserves across the north, experiences foreign to ordinary

Canadians. Our hero insisted that he was not interested in doing more than he already was. It was a small group that played in no league but their own. What more could he do? He showed up. Anyone could throw the Cree a ball. They will spend the whole practice shooting the ball around. Unless someone steps in and says you five are on one team and you five are on the other, well the game is just not going to happen. Parents should take responsibility for their children and take control of the community's direction for education. Right now, the government is just throwing the people the ball. They are shooting around, but no one up here has stepped in and shown them how to organize a game.

“The key is to talk to them in their language. To make them laugh, say the swears, there is nothing funnier to them than a *moonioiw* talking Cree. Speak a bit of Cree?”

“That's all good for the short term, yes, but I'm tired of being blamed for some colonial mentality. I had nothing to do with this mess, neither did my parents or my parent's parents. Their women are being killed by their own men, most cases, by men known to them. Record high incarceration rates, record high poverty, and the violence is only getting worse. The Agricultural Benefit Agreement cash will be the end of this community. Throw the meth on top of the gangs, out the east and west window peddling drugs and booze already, this place will blow up. It will be over”.

“You need to take responsibility, all Canadians do, intergenerational trauma from residential schools...”

“I was born in the 1980's, I had nothing to do with that shit”.

His namesake saw the men not as perpetrators of violence but as victims of their childhood, victims of colonialism and the colonial mentality. After an apology for the intrusion he left and was never seen again. Arthur fastened the door and returned to the kitchenette to fix himself a drink and wait for his wife to come home. There beside the mixing glass on the counter was his key to the front door.



Steven N. Wingate

THREE CURSES OF MAN

A kingdom of impossible secrets. The jester at the keyhole. The sly, aching limbs of the ptarmigan as it trolls the tundra for meager grub.

Beyond these images we are unable to offer you a single morsel of solace, but please repent nonetheless. The salvation we offer is far better than the salvation offered around the corner, down the street, or even uptown, and our prices are far cheaper, so you will not feel ripped off.

Join us. Throw away the husks of what made you once believe. Throw away licentiousness and your dark hungers, replace them with sweat and mental confusion so warm you will conflate it with the memory of your first love. Continue on this path until you encounter an armored knight who asks what fuels your restless pursuits, and answer him thus:

"Greed, from love of my mother's breast. Sorrow, the bitter aftertaste of my first moment alone. Unease, what happened when all the stoplights turned green at once and left me on the threshold of endless possibilities, all ending in disorder."

SHADOWS AND MAPS

The scavenger birds and all their emulators kept their disrespectful shadows out of our sight until dawn. No doubt they spent the night parading around in circles, never failing to ignore the pleas of their lust.

It is likely, I have heard, that such birds will be adorned with holy feathers in heaven. That the promised divine comeuppance will indeed occur: last to first, ugliness to beauty, simplicity of mind elevated to a goal we can all achieve.

These birds threaten nightly to devour my liver and soul, aping the eagles that feasted on Prometheus. I need a bodyguard for my soul, which is so priceless no gallery can dream of auctioning it, no corporation can hire it to hawk its sullen wares.

Your soul, too, is priceless. Do not pretend that I am yet another scribe speaking only of himself. Your soul is golden, your soul radiates love in perfect concentric circles around you. Your soul is a map which gives the streets of our universe more coherence than that universe itself—always obfuscating, always coy—is ever willing to offer.

BRAHMANS BENEATH THE SKIN

Everyone is exchanging new hats for old, piling plenty upon plenty. Declaring that no thought, however vague, should be permitted to leave our mouths without submitting to the joint caress of those minds we have deemed most holy.

Sirens ring to celebrate the separation of all from all. Private eyes look upon one another seeking private thoughts, which dance unabashed in the air seeking new masters. Who would you be if your thoughts desired another home? Would you miss them sorely or, like the brahman you are beneath the skin, dismiss them and appropriate the dreams of another before strolling on?

Answer my question. But first inhale as deeply as you have ever imagined—have no fear of destroying the fragile tissue within you, for it is eternal. Then entertain yourself with fantasies of bondage, certain that release will come. For what is more lovely than the thought of love that does not reinvent itself, but pauses briefly to smile before expiration?

You cannot answer this second question? Then you are not worthy to answer my first. Go home, feed your pets and your demons. Sleep and try again.

WARMTH IN HIDDEN PLACES

Not caring if the hornet is mad not caring if the bull is mad you stumble barefoot in pursuit of a sun that mocks you from its sullen perch. Not believing what your mother told you not believing the formulae of the professors you seek warmth in hidden places, you seek trigonometric symbols in the scrap heaps of dead civilizations, in the boneyard of Olduvai Gorge, in tombs of peat and stone and sand.

The consequence of this search for a race such as ours, forever mired in possibility, is the inability to bear true friendship. Is torrents of wasteful emotion spit into the void. Is turgid hands that cannot grasp or caress. Is a pack mule's back, sagging from the memory of a billion other lives that conscience alone prevents us from living again.

Beaver Moon



Photo: Sue Matheson

CONTRIBUTORS

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Debbie Cutshaw received her Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice in 1974 from the University of Nevada-Reno in 1974, which she used as a state prison caseworker. She earned two Master's degrees (Literature/Teaching English) in 2001 and 2007, respectively. While teaching English literature at the Nevada State Prison, she became the founder of the African American literature and poetry symposium which is still being held there once or twice a year and was given a plaque by inmates of NAACP Chapter 1113 (NSP) in appreciation for that work and for being editor of their youth magazine. After retiring, she entered a short story contest with "Shakespeare's Shoes" about a 1999 time traveling Henry Condell (Shakespeare's friend), which she later adapted her screenplay, *Don't Mention Shakespeare!*, which with another contest entry, *An Ordinary Death*, set in Theresienstadt Concentration camp, were posted on Amazon Studios site. When not hiking with Mac, or walking her dogs, Niles and Daphne, she reads and works on lesson plans for Writing Skills, plans classic film showings with questions for Inmates, and is hoping to soon return to volunteer teaching at the local prisons in a hopefully post-Covid world.

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Alice-Catherine Jennings is the author of *Katherine of Aragon: A Collection of Poems* (Finishing Line Press, 2016) and *Notations: The Imagined Diary of Julian of Norwich* (Red Bird Chapbooks, 2017). Her poetry has appeared in various publications worldwide including *Hawai'i Review*, *Boyne Berries*, *Nitrogen House*, *The Louisville Review*, and *Red Sky*, an anthology on violence against women (Sable Books). She holds an MA in Slavic

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dee Hobsbawn-Smith is an award-winning Saskatchewan-based poet, essayist, fiction writer, journalist, food writer, educator, retired chef, and local foods advocate. Her work has appeared in Canadian and American literary journals, magazines, newspapers, anthologies, including *Gastronomica*, *Creative Nonfiction*, *The New Quarterly*, *The Malahat Review*, and *Canadian Literature*. She and her husband, the writer and poet Dave Margoshes, live rurally on family land west of Saskatoon. Dee has two adult sons. A lifelong learner,

dee is a Red Seal Chef, holds an MFA in Writing from the University of Saskatchewan, and is currently completing her MA in Literature, also at the U of S. She has served as a mentor and was the 35th Writer in Residence at the Saskatoon Public Library, and is an active and motivated member of the writing and culinary communities. Her eighth book, *Bread & Water: Essays*, will be published by the University of Regina Press in fall 2021.

Jefferson Holdridge was born in White Plains, NY, and raised in Connecticut. Director of Wake Forest University Press and Professor of English at WFU in North Carolina, Holdridge is the author of four volumes of poetry, *Eruptions* (Belfast, 2013), *Devil's Den and Other Poems* (Ithaca, 2015), *The Sound Thereof*, (Bradford, UK, 2017), *The Wells of Venice* (Eugene, 2020). He has written two critical books entitled *Those Mingled Seas: The Poetry of W.B. Yeats, the Beautiful and the Sublime* (2000) and *The Poetry of Paul Muldoon* (2008). He has also edited and introduced two volumes of *The Wake Forest Series of Irish Poetry* (2005; 2010), as well as *Post-Ireland? Essays on Contemporary Irish Poetry*, which he co-edited and introduced with Brian O'Conchubhair (Winston-Salem, NC: Wake Forest University Press, 2017). His most recent critical work, *Stepping through Origins: Nature, Home, and Landscape*, will come out with Syracuse in 2021.

Li Jiamei is a postgraduate student of Sun Yat-Sen University. Li is a student of Sally Ito whom she met in The 2018 Sun Yat-sen University Writers' Residency. Encouraged by the writers in the residency and inspired by Professor Dai Fan in her Creative Writing class, she wrote "Little Brother." Li is interested in presenting Chinese culture to her readers.

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Rupert Loydell is Senior Lecturer in the School of Writing and Journalism at Falmouth University, the editor of *Stride* magazine, and contributing editor to *International Times*. He is a widely published poet whose most recent poetry books are *Dear Mary* (Shearsman, 2017) and *A Confusion of Marys* (Shearsman, 2020). He has edited anthologies for Salt, Shearsman and KFS, written for academic journals such as *Punk & Post-Punk* (which he is on the editorial board of), *New Writing*, *Revenant*, *The Journal of Visual Art Practice*, *Text*, *Axon*, *Musicology Research*, *Short Fiction in Theory and Practice*, and contributed co-written chapters to *Brian Eno. Oblique Music* (Bloomsbury, 2016), *Critical Essays on Twin Peaks: The Return* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) and *Music in Twin Peaks: Listen to the Sounds* (Routledge, 2021).

Robert Luce earned his Bachelor's degree in Classical Studies and Master's degree in English Literature with an emphasis on Literary Theory from the University of Texas at San Antonio. He currently teaches Literature and Writing at John Marshall High School and Brown-Mackie College in San Antonio, Texas.

Dave Margoshes writes poetry and fiction on a farm west of Saskatoon. His work has appeared in many Canadian literary magazines and elsewhere, including three times in Best Canadian Poetry. His latest poetry collection, *A Calendar Of Reckoning*, was published in 2018. His previous poetry title, *Dimensions of an Orchard*, won the 2010 Saskatchewan Book Awards Poetry Prize.

Brian W. A. MacKinnon, (BA Hons English '69, Ed Certification '72, Retired English Teacher) taught English & Creative Writing at St. Pierre Collegiate, St John's Ravenscourt, Argyle Alternative and RB Russell Vocational School where he edited four award winning Anthologies of Student Creative Writing. He is an Anti-Poverty Activist and the Founder/Director of MacKinnon's Y-Not? Anti-Poverty Program Inc., a registered charity with focuses on Fitness Memberships & Food & Anti-Addictions Strategies for Winnipeg's inner city. He is a published poet in small Canadian & American magazines, the author of a chapbook, *Fathers & Heroes* (1982), and an occasional journalist and

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Joanna Munholland was raised on a grain farm in east central Saskatchewan. After finishing her undergraduate degrees at the University of Saskatchewan (2014) and her Master of Arts from the University of Leicester (2015) she lived in The Pas, Manitoba for three years. She returned to the UK in January 2019, and as of September 2020 works and lives in Saskatchewan.

Léna Remy-Kovach is a doctoral student at the Albert-Ludwigs Universität Freiburg, Germany. She holds B.A.s in both English and Italian Studies and an M.A. in American Civilization from the Université de Strasbourg, France, as well as an M.A. in Indigenous and Canadian Studies from Carleton University, Canada. Her current research projects include the representations of pipeline protests in cartoons and comic strips, the modification of Indigenous mythologies in Euro-American horror television series, and the imagery of hunger and cannibalism in recent Young Adult fiction by Indigenous writers. Her Ph.D. thesis focuses on the notions of healing and (re)conciliation in contemporary Gothic Indigenous literatures from Canada and the United States.

Margaret Shaw-MacKinnon (BFA Hons, MA English) is a writer, painter, educator, and independent scholar. Currently, she is a research fellow at St. Paul's College at the University of Manitoba, working on a manuscript of linked short stories set in Manitoba

between 1936 and 1980, one of which is “Intervening Angels.” She is the author of *Tiktala*, recipient of the McNally Robinson Book for Young People Award (1997) and the Parents’ Choice Honour in the US. Her anti-bullying middle-years novel, *The Beech Nut of Big Water Beach* (2008) was short-listed for the Carol Shields Winnipeg Book Award and has an accompanying guide, available online through Teachers Pay Teachers. Margaret teaches story writing and illustrating to youth from K to 12 in the Manitoba Arts Council’s Artists-in-the-Schools program. She is married to retired teacher and anti-poverty activist, Brian MacKinnon, and they live in Winnipeg, parents to three young adults.

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Bill Tremblay is an award-winning poet as well as a novelist, teacher, editor, and reviewer whose work has appeared in seven full-length volumes of poetry, including *Crying in the Cheap Seats* [University of Massachusetts Press] *The Anarchist Heart* [New Rivers Press], *Home Front* [Lynx House Press], *Second Sun: New & Selected Poems* [L’Epervier Press], *Duhamel: Ideas of Order in Little Canada* [BOA Editions Ltd.], *Rainstorm Over the Alphabet* [Lynx House Press], and most recently *Shooting Script: Door of Fire* [Eastern Washington University Press] which won the Colorado Poetry Prize. Hundreds of his poems have been published in literary magazines in the United States and Canada, as well such anthologies as the *Pushcart Prize Anthology*, *The Jazz Poetry Anthology*, *Best American Poetry, 2003*, *The Portable Poetry Workshop*, and *Responding to Literature*. He has received awards and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the

National Endowment for the Humanities as well as The Pushcart Prize Anthology and the Corporation at Yaddo. Bill edited *Colorado Review* for 15 years, served as a member of the Program Directors Council of the Associated Writing Programs [AWP], and is the recipient of the John F. Stern Distinguished Professor award for his thirty plus years teaching in and directing the MFA in Creative Writing Program at Colorado State University.

Tyler Turcotte lives and teaches with his wife in Garden River, Alberta. He is from Miramichi, New Brunswick.

Steven N. Wingate is the author of the novels *The Leave-Takers* (2021) and *Of Fathers and Fire* (2019), both part of the Flyover Fiction Series from the University of Nebraska Press, and the short story collection *Wifeshopping* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008). He is associate professor at South Dakota State University.

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The *quint's* fifty third issue is issuing a call for theoretically informed and historically grounded submissions of scholarly interest—as well as creative writing, original art, interviews, and reviews of books and films. The deadline for this call is the 15th of May 2021—but please note that we accept manu/digi-scripts at any time.

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