Well, it's a job. Like any other kind of work, I guess. It's not what I had set out to do. I had my own herd, good stock I built myself. It wasn't too long ago you could make a decent living at it. My old man gave me some fresh heifers and the use of his bull, you know. I was only fifteen, but I knew pretty much how to set about it, had good ideas, could work out for starting-up money. Used to make hay for the other farmers. I could get their hay in for them twice as fast as
they did with their own families working, so they let me have the whole job, and I wasn’t eighteen yet. I had one job regular before I even had a driver’s license, old man had me drop off, I was making money good, had my eye on a nice piece of ground near the home place but not too near, you know. I didn’t want to be right under the old hen’s wing.

The war was on then. I was all het up to go but I was way too young. My older brother did go. He didn’t come back. Whatever he saw out there looked better to him, I guess. He wasn’t hot to farm anyway, I was. I had some pretty clear notions then, I tell you.

But in my spare time I had gone and started a family, you might say, and I had to get married, and that was that. Kids. God I had more kids than cattle sometimes. Anyway. I started hauling stock in the winter, for a little extra money, and I had a good truck, an old Ford that my uncle had cut down for a farm truck, just hauled his hay and firewood on it, so I built it up. It had some low gears, I want to tell you. I could ease it out of those damn muddy cowyards and not get stuck, so people would call me. I moved a lot of cattle those years, and I don’t mean anything like this. No, those bastards was all standing, and when I got them there they were still standing. I never did any rough driving. I was so good, for a while there I was hauling horses. I took some trotters up to the Bangor fair, and you know horsesmen is awful fussy. I like horses hut they are a pain to move. Throw fits for the fun of it, see, people push their stock too hard. Then after they’ve starved or scoured the sides up. A good team, hell, they jump on the truck. You think I’m lying, but you should see them, all rared up, they’re dying to get to work. Not like this business — they’re dying to lie down, you might say.

Hell, I hate this kind of stuff. The things I see. ‘Course I don’t go yelling to the Be Kind To The Piggies League or anything, but God, I had more kids than cattle sometimes. Anyway, I started hauling stock in the winter, for a little extra money, and I had a good truck, an old Ford that my uncle had cut down for a farm truck, just hauled his hay and firewood on it, so I built it up. It had some low gears, I want to tell you. I could ease it out of those damn muddy cowyards and not get stuck, so people would call me. I moved a lot of cattle those years, and I don’t mean anything like this. No, those bastards was all standing, and when I got them there they were still standing. I never did any rough driving. I was so good, for a while there I was hauling horses. I took some trotters up to the Bangor fair, and you know horsesmen is awful fussy. I like horses but they are a pain to move. Throw fits for the fun of it, see, people push their stock too hard. Then after they’ve starved or scoured the sides up. A good team, hell, they jump on the truck. You think I’m lying, but you should see them, all rared up, they’re dying to get to work. Not like this business — they’re dying to lie down, you might say.

But cattle, well, you can get into a mess with a baby. I mean, it was too dark to see, and she wasn’t making much noise, didn’t have the strength. But I knew she was. I was getting madder by the minute, I was swearing. I want to tell you, every time I hit a rough place in the road. I couldn’t hear her move, I know cattle. I tell you what I’ve done with my own, see. I never thrashed them around by the ear, and I never thrashed them around by the ear. I mean, it was too dark to see, and she wasn’t making much noise, didn’t have the strength. But I knew she was. I was getting madder by the minute, I was swearing. I want to tell you, every time I hit a rough place in the road. I couldn’t hear her move, I know cattle. Know how they feel. And I got so ripping, pretty soon I was shouting at the son-of-a-bitch and his squinty-eyed look and his “Now you get her there fast, you hear, and I want that live weight,” and never a word about how it was fifteen degrees and I was up in the middle of the night and some of his stock he got from my father when he had to sell out.

Then I saw this nose pointing up in my mirror. I have a window through to the back so I can see whether things are still standing. I saw this muzzle and I knew that cow was in agony, she was trying to raise herself up. I couldn’t stand it. I shifted down one, two, three gears and coasted right off into somebody’s yard. It was three in the morning, right when my mother died, and there wasn’t a soul about. I got out. Just aching and quaking all over, and I came to that cow and I took her under the chin, like I always handled my own, you know. I never thrashed them around by the ear, and I talked to her. Someone cow cow cow, someone boss, you know, and she relaxed for a bit. Then the agony came on her again and she kicked. I mean, it was really weird, you know. I never thrashed them around by the ear, and she relaxed for a bit. Then the agony came on her again and she kicked. I mean, it was really weird, you know. I never thrashed them around by the ear, and she relaxed for a bit. Then the agony came on her again and she kicked. I mean, it was really weird, you know. I never thrashed them around by the ear, and she relaxed for a bit. Then the agony came on her again and she kicked. I mean, it was really weird, you know. I never thrashed them around by the ear, and she relaxed for a bit.

Well, she died like that. I’d say it was better than the knacker’s. Bang, she was gone, suffering, no more. Wasn’t better for my hand, though, I broke it. I’m right-handed, too, and I had to get back in that truck and drive to Bangor and unload and get the recipt, all the while pretending there wasn’t anything wrong. See, you couldn’t tell how that cow died. There wasn’t a mark on her. So Mr. Efficiency got dead weight, and I got a broken hand and it wasn’t worked right since. I don’t regret it a bit. Like I say, though, this is an awful job. Dead and down, that don’t tell you the half of it.

Catherine S. Baker
Spruce Head
is a free-lance writer

Glass Eater

This sweet-skinned woman lifts the glass, centers her small nose within the rim. Her tongue runs the edge. She takes the glass between her teeth and bites. Steadily chews glass to sand and swallows.

This sweet-skinned woman holds a mirror to eye, to cheek, examines pores of chin and nose, bares even rows of teeth. She studies map of tongue, throat lining, licks the cool mirror surface. Catlike, licks reflections from the glass.

This sweet-skinned woman stalks the window, takes measure of its height, its width. Beyond the glass the driveway feeds the road. She breathes against the pane, fastens lips to its cold surface, draws the road that pulls away from her.

Wendy Kindred
Fort Kent
Notes: on at UMF & with Black Fly Review
Interesting research is being done on the West Coast. Sarvad Medrick, professor of psychology at the University of Southern California, has shown in recent years that some people have a genetic predisposition to violent behavior. While this is not a surprising conclusion, or even necessarily a new conclusion, his scientific technique is far more exacting than that of past theorists.

Medrick has been measuring the heart rates, brain waves and electrical properties of the skin in 9,000 children. As he has been watching those children as they grow, linking the three properties of the skin in 9,000 children; he has given fight on a holy day. At age thirty, he succumbed to a septicemia, which we now know is caused by a bacterium. According to Holocaust survivors, he had already strangled a cousin with his bare hands. Given my research, I am surprised that the children's genetic predisposition is not more exacting than that of past theorists.

In recent years that some people have a genetic predisposition to violent behavior. While this is not a surprising conclusion, or even necessarily a new conclusion, his scientific technique is far more exacting than that of past theorists.

Genetics across the ages. I am a simple descendant of Brian Boru. And I am a descendant of Hugh O'Neill (according to the whisperings of my mother).

The sixteenth century: Out of Boru's grave in the North rose my own ancestor, a spadebeard, who was somewhat a dweeb and didn't fit the dangerous age: historians are hoyz about the machinations behind the murder itself. The new king was regarded as a deliverer of his people from the Norsemen, long the dread enemy of Ireland. It is on record for his political dexterity, his mastery of administration, his military finesse, his sense of law and order, the reforms he brought to ecclesiastical affairs. He was also a regular body-hacker.

The Battle of Clontarf, in 1014, was the bloodiest in all of Irish history. It took place on a holy day. At age seventy-three, however, he was beyond such personal dilemmas: he was the last king of the Norsemen, long the dread enemy of the Irish tribes. He is on record for his political dexterity, his mastery of administration, his military finesse, his sense of law and order, the reforms he brought to ecclesiastical affairs. He was also a regular body-hacker.

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Big Fish/Little Fish

Chapter One of the novel

I first met Betty in the Pre-Natal Clinic waiting room, but somehow the story had always started a half-hour earlier, at Mrs. Bodwell's desk, Out-Patient Admissions, G - L. At least the two events — meeting Betty, answering Mrs. Bodwell's in-take questionnaire — have fused so completely in my mind that they might be laminate to opposite sides of the Out-Patient Red Card I soon carried upstairs to the Clinic.

Mrs. Bodwell was pining tunafish out of her partial — I could smell it — as she rolled her form into her typewriter.

"Name, please?"

"Bodwell.

"Age?" She wiped her front tooth with a Kleenex.

"Thirty-two.

"Are you responsible for yourself?"

I hesitated there, on principle, having no idea what she was talking about, answered yes.

"Employer?"

"I'm a photographer — self-employed — but I'm covered under my husband's policy." I unzipped the portfolio I was carrying instead of a purse — I had an appointment with a newspaper editor after the Clinic — and fumbled disconcertedly for the Blue Cross/Blue Shield card Charlie had given me that morning.

Mrs. Bodwell, reaching for Write-Out, breathed tunafish unanimously.

"Then you're too, " she said, "responsible."

As I handed my Red Card to the Pre-Natal Clinic receptionist and took the empty chair, I was still replaying the conversation so I'd remember it exactly for sure the other women in the waiting room. There were thirteen of us, although our numbers shrank each time the receptionist read off a name. Teenagers with sweet, lip-chewed faces and quiet hands. I was oldest, except for Betty, and, apparently, the only one who was nervous.

Betty had stepped talking and was staring longingly at the portfolio through the space between our chairs, as if peering into a tankful of rainbow trout. I stared at her, picking out details to drop at Charlie's feet that night, like a cat squirting with dead mouse by the tail — the orange plaid miniskirt, creeping up to her underpants, the boar hairs on her upper thighs, the way she spread from her own chair into half of mine.

Finally, Betty couldn't stand it any longer. "Can I see a picture?" she bounced. I hesitated and her piercing eye — but I was curious to know say, "Sure," I said, sounding nonchalant as I unzipped the case, although my heart was pounding.

There, carefully stacked inside, lay the past ten years of my life. Black-and-white photographs of buildings — Boston, Cleveland, Los Angeles, New York, Close-ups of doorways and window frames, stone and plaster, walls of glass. I slipped one out and held it up for Betty, the last in a series of steps. Yes, I had a passion for steps, had photographed nothing else — except commission work — for the last two years. Steps in one hand, wet steps like little cataracts, steps breaking in waves before Government Center, steps after an earthquake, leading nowhere, like the ladders in a dream.

I'd shot this particular photo outside a two-family frame house in Cambridge, next door to my apartment, and it was my favorite. Stark shadows, cold fall lighting — cannibalizing narrative. Pure geometry, I liked to think.

"It's steps. I explained, not sure Betty would figure it out.

"Nice place to sit," she nodded, sucking noisily on her bottom lip. "Me and Junior sit out a lot, but I don't come out good black and white. I've better full color."

She glanced over at Junior, who had curled herself around the fire station and was preening a firesuit with two wet fingers. "You gotta eat just right, Rose-Mary. You gotta take good care of yourself," she said, slipping the magnificent steps back into her partial.

"Hair, an inch," she pointed to a three-year-old in a Dr. School dress, preening a firesuit. "You just walk that's Junior," she added. "I named her Elmo," she said, slipping the magnificent steps hack into her partial.

"Betty, Jr. " she added. "I named her Betty. And, apparently, the only one who was nervous."

"I was still replaying the conversation so I'd remember it exactly for sure the other women in the waiting room. There were thirteen of us, although our numbers shrank each time the receptionist read off a name. Teenagers with sweet, lip-chewed faces and quiet hands. I was oldest, except for Betty, and, apparently, the only one who was nervous."

"I wasn't. I said, sounding nonchalant as I unzipped the case, although my heart was pounding.

"Me and Junior just been down to Bradlees, but her dress had surfaced, like a splinter working up the skin. From behind, Betty was more outlandish than front-on — barely five feet tall, with a bottom like an institutional salad howl on a table for one. I might have laughed or shrugged or not even noticed. Instead I called out, "Good-bye, Betty," more plainly than I realized.

"Good-bye and waved. "Good-bye, what did you say your name was?"

"Rosemary."

"Yeah, Rosemary. She was hopping back toward me, hanging on Junior and pulling down her skirt. "We do the whole thing together — us girls — she swept her hair over the empty waiting room. "Next time we got the four Food Loops. I done it before, but it don't matter. They make you do it every time."

At the word "They," Betty stiffened. She scooped Junior up in her arms and squeezed so tightly the little girl squeaked. Betty's poet's tattoo to the corners of her eyes — a horse snorting fire — some distant calamity which I could neither see nor touch, something hanging over us and ready to fall, like Henny Penny's sky.

"You gotta eat just right, Rose-Mary. You gotta take good care of yourself, " she whispered close to my ear, "or they take your baby away."

Gone the bop, the singsong. She stood still, absentmindedly preening Junior's hair, smiling proudly as she took over the motel desk.

"Betty, Jr. " she added. "I named her Elmo. I finally got my boy."

"Him or a She?"

When I shrugged, she smiled, wider than the wide-mouthed jar, and circled one hand on her belly. "This is Elmo. I finally got my boy."

Betty nodded, humming. "I stopped bouncing. Nothing moved her hand. A simple gesture, full of the maternal calm, the joyfulness I felt so far from. I wanted a child — theoretically. I didn't love it yet, I hadn't picked out a name."

Just then the receptionist read off "Betty Bundi." Betty smacked her hand and bopped to her feet. "Come on, Honey, let's go listen for Elmo," she sang to Junior. "To me she said, "See ya next time, Lady.""

Junior dropped one last fireman down the hole crooning, "Ding, ding, Slinky!" at no one in particular. They were starting down the corridor to the examining rooms, hand in hand.

Had I seen the two of them from behind, I might have laughed or shaken my head. I had to look, I didn't pick out a name. Just then the receptionist read off "Betty Bundi." Betty smacked her hand and bopped to her feet. "Come on, Honey, let's go listen for Elmo," she sang to Junior. "To me she said, "See ya next time, Lady."

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Spending Time at Augusta

The grey sky seems right enough
But the air too warm for late November
The grass on the madhouse lawn too thick and green
Where a dozen starving river gulls
Scattered like cast-off golfballs on the turf
Dream, I suppose, of salad days before landfill
Open dumps, pickings sweet and plenty
They are motionless
Quiet as popcorn on a theatre rug
Behind his window
(the one in the middle of the brick wall
facing the lawn)
The madman, too, is dreaming
Hanging his latest painting
Soon he will run out of space
Only one spot left on his wall
He is not worried, though,
There is sky enough to hang them on
Nicey grey, clear of gulls and dumpsmoke
The madman lies on his back
Motionless, his paintings still glowing
After so many years
He paints more slowly now
Relishing each stroke
The bright oils oozing through the bristles
The canvas quivering in the light
At first they took away his paints
But he found them
When the blackness at the fringes cleared
But that was much later
After he had learned to be still
To hide, relinquishing his body
To save care, they pulled his teeth
Like cutting off my cock, he said
You may as well
A man might as well be cockless
To silence him, they wired his jaws
Feeding him through a tube
Draining him through another
Then they cut a hole in his side
To collect his shit in a bag
Now you'll learn to be quiet
In the morning they came early
To change his bag and bottles
Give him a bath and a walk in the hallway
Then they strapped him to his bed again
Leaving him alone to paint and dream

Robert Alan Burns
Gardner

The Boy Who Wrote Science Fiction

Some teachers have a way of getting in close. They amaze me with the web of detail they have amassed about each of their students and the insights they reveal. What I have to say about a student in trouble always strikes me as painfully obvious. So-and-so has the ability but isn't trying hard enough. So-and-so is chronically absent. Other teachers talk eloquent volumes, and I can't figure out whether they just have more gumption than me to base a whole theory on five facts or whether I missed out on some psychology course the rest of them took.

We were all pretty soft-spoken, though, when we met to puzzle out Hilmar Adams's disappearance. His parents were as bewildered as we were. The mother, stoically grey and gaunt from a lifetime of farm labor, seemed apologetic, as if she sensed the school was blaming her for her son's disappearance. The father, a giant of a pig farmer, drummed his fists in frustration on the conference table, red wrists thick as fenceposts.

"Can't say why he left," Hilmar's father said. "Worked his butt off at the farm, but I can't say as he complained any more than you ought to expect from a fifteen-year-old. You know. He'd rather take his dirt hike up into the woods than feed the chickens and such."

Hilmar was an indifferent student. You noticed him mostly because he grew about an inch every couple of days. The other kids made fun of his hands in an admiring kind of way, they were so big he could hide his whole face in one of them. He played football. He always came to school. He liked his share of rivalry around, but, like most of the kids who came in off the farms, he had a solid base of respect — whether for education or for authority or for what his father would do to him if he got in trouble. I don't know, but I kept him closer to a C than an F.

Usually when a kid runs away, there are half a dozen of his friends who know where he went, and invariably this gets around to the teachers. The kids actually wanted to tell. They aren't any more comfortable with the idea of a kid gone than we are. But this time no clues came up, even though the assistant principal called in half the football team. I made my undistinguished observations at the meeting, wished Hilmar's parents the best of luck, and retreated to my desk. Hilmar Adams. Hell, I wasn't going to be the one to find him. I don't have all that much to say to the football types — if he let slip a word to one of the teachers, it surely wasn't to me. Just before I left school, I slipped Hilmar's folder into my briefcase. At the very least, I figured, I could look over his work for some idea of what was on his mind.

Before bed that night I leafed through Hilmar's folder. Like most kids, Hilmar did best when he knew what he was talking about and worst when he was responding to some ambiguous assignment that he neither understood nor cared for. He got a B+ on a "how to" paper about slaughtering and butchering a pig, notable especially for the illustration and, for grotesque authenticity, signed in pig's blood. He wrote the standard paper on how he got his first deer and what would have been a decent research paper on edible wild plants of New England if he hadn't more or less copied it right out of Ewell Gibbons. The rest was mostly junk — hasty, brief, ill-conceived notions passed in for the sake of not flunking. Except for his science fiction project.

Hilmar's science fiction project was thick. Just holding it, I was glad I'd given him an A. I could picture him staying up for nights compiling the details of his story, getting it down in his slow, methodical, pencilling sort of way, knowing he'd have to be up by five anyhow for his morning chores.

It was called "Adam Two," and from the title alone you could predict the not so very original plot. The world explodes in nuclear holocaust. Everybody's dead, so to speak, but a kid who happens to be named Adam. He lives in an earthen sheltered hollow dug into a hill. For a month he stays inside his shelter, rationing his food. He paints more slowly now — the bright oils oozing through the bristles — the canvas quivering in the light. At first they took away his paints but he found them when the blackness at the fringes cleared. But that was much later. After he had learned to be still to hide, relinquishing his body to save care, they pulled his teeth like cutting off my cock, he said. You may as well. A man might as well be cockless. To silence him, they wired his jaws feeding him through a tube draining him through another then they cut a hole in his side to collect his shit in a bag.

Now you'll learn to be quiet. In the morning they came early to change his bag and bottles give him a bath and a walk in the hallway then they strapped him to his bed again leaving him alone to paint and dream. But what got me most was the detail. The only part of "Adam Two" that wasn't just plot being mindlessly rolled forward was the account of Adam's survival. The Boys Who Wrote Science Fiction

Kate Kennedy
Portland

Kate Kennedy teaches at Portland H.S.
and roasting of animals, the identification and preparation of edible roots and plants.

What Hilmar had done was transform the details of his own life's experiences into fiction. That fall, he had been invited along with five other boys from our school up to Rangeley, Maine, where the Navy runs a survival school. There's a Naval Air Station in our district which flies spy planes over the Atlantic keeping tabs on the Soviet submarine fleet. The school in Rangeley, out in the western mountains of our state, teaches the men what to do if they survive a crash. They learn how to use a parachute about as thoroughly as the Indians used buffalo, how to trap, and how to forage. They build snow huts in the winter and pine bough shelters the rest of the year. For two days of the course they are cast off in pairs into the wilderness with parachutes, pocket knives, the emergency kits each one carries on the plane, and the clothes on their backs. For good public relations, the Navy invites local kids on modified courses, and that's how Hilmar got to go. It was, I'm sure, the high point of his year, more so than his part in our first winning football season in a decade. And it set me to thinking.

The next day I talked to Ben Graffam, Hilmar's social studies teacher. I had an idea Hilmar was obsessed by survival and I wanted to see if another teacher would have noticed this too.

"No," Ben told me, sipping on a cigarette between classes. "We didn't exactly study survival techniques this year. We did talk about fallout shelters some, but not a whole lot. The 'Issues in American History' class has a section on nuclear war."

"Hilmar wrote a story about nuclear war," I began.

" Didn't everybody?" Ben asked.

"Nearly everybody. But I'm thinking about Hilmar now. Did he show any unusual interest when you studied nuclear war? Did he bring up survival and stuff like that?"

"Yes, I suppose he was interested. It's probably the liveliest part of the year in that course, and kids tend to speak up a whole lot more than the rest of the time, when they're yarning into textbooks and asking if they need to know this or that for the test. In general, the kids get pretty angry. Nuclear war seems both so inevitable and so terrible that they can't believe that their parents' generation would allow it to exist. They vow they won't leave the world in the same mess for their children."

"Did Hilmar say that?"

"Probably. Most of the kids say something like that. You ought to come in some year when it's going on."

I thanked Ben and returned to my classes. Later in the day, I found a paper of Hilmar's which Ben had left in my box. It read: "I think it sucks that nuclear bombs can destroy us all. I don't think they should have been invented. A lot of the kids have been saying that, if the Bomb is dropped, they hope they are one of the first to go. That it wouldn't be good to survive when all your friends and your family is dead. I think they are wrong. And irresponsible. The human race has to continue. That's a basic law of nature. Even if I was the only one left I would need to find a way to survive."

That evening I went back to "Adam Two" with renewed interest. Since I'd already figured that Hilmar had built his fiction on things he really knew, I had a hunch that maybe the story would tell me where to find him.

"Adam Two" meticulously described the location and construction of the survivor's shelter and, as I predicted, the details added up: the fictional town was figured if I wandered a wide enough bunch of circles north of the clearing I might find Hilmar, though I was sure if he'd put himself there he'd be fairly well hidden.

Why I decided to go it alone is beyond me. Glory, I guess. I figured I'd solved the puzzle and deserved the glory of it, or else maybe I wasn't so sure and didn't want to drag another body on a fool's errand. I had no particular plan of what to do if I did find Hilmar, though I suppose I'd seen enough movies to know that all you really need to do is to talk reason into a megaphone and eventually your man will come out with his hands up. I think that was the best my imagination could come up with that Saturday morning when I set off.

I parked on the road, about half a mile down from a sheep farm which might have been the one Hilmar described in his story. The path to Egypt was less than a mile through muddy woods, which had been recently cut for firewood, the trail now a wide and battered skidder road. I headed north when I hit the open field, squinting my way into the thickets of bush, poplar, and stripe maple that had grown over what, not long ago, had been thriving farmland. I flashed a partridge, and the beat of its wings sounded like my own heart jumping out of its cage. I paused at every hillock and pile of leaves, looking for clues. One particular rise looked like it and I began to circle it, hoping for some sort of entrance. A patch of leaves and branches looking too neat to have just happened here attracted me, but as I headed toward it I found myself stumbling, and then down.

Hilmar had dug a pit, a sort of moat, then chickenwired it and covered it back up with a couple inches of rotten leaves. It was an effective trap, if you weren't wary of it, and it effectively trapped me. I saw the end of Hilmar's rifle before I saw his face.

"Don't shoot, don't shoot," I bellowed.

"Mr. Atherton," Hilmar spoke. "Jeesum."

The pit was about six feet deep and six across, easy enough to scramble out of if there wasn't a rifle in my face maybe, but I felt trapped. Again, I asked him not to shoot.

"You scared or something?"

"Shitless," I told Hilmar, "scared shitless. What are you going to do to me?"

"You looking for me or taking a Sunday stroll?"

"Looking, Hilmar. A lot of people have been worried about you."

"How'd you find me?"

"I didn't tell nobody. Nobody knows about this place."

"In your story. You must have been making this place the same time you were making your story."

"Jesus," he said, "takes an English teacher to believe something you read's real."

"Nearly everybody. But I'm thinking about Hilmar now. Did he show any unusual interest when you studied nuclear war? Did he bring up survival and stuff like that?"

"Yes, I suppose he was interested. It's probably the liveliest part of the year in that course, and kids tend to speak up a whole lot more than the rest of the time, when they're yarning into textbooks and asking if they need to know this or that for the test. In general, the kids get pretty angry. Nuclear war seems both so inevitable and so terrible that they can't believe that their parents' generation would allow it to exist. They vow they won't leave the world in the same mess for their children."

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"Adam Two" meticulously described the location and construction of the survivor's shelter and, as I predicted, the details added up: the fictional town was our own Bowdoinham, a quiet farm village which had once loaded the holds of clipper ships with ice that sailed as far as China; the shelter itself was located into the side of a hill near a big clearing that used to be a town called "Grassville." In the story, that is. Locals called the place "Egypt," a prime deer hunting spot that also happened to lie on one of my favorite cross-country ski routes. I figured if I wandered a wide enough bunch of circles north of the clearing I might find Hilmar, though I was sure if he'd put himself there he'd be fairly well hidden.

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horsehair mattress and a sleeping bag. Around the perimeter of the room was a ditch, maybe three inches deep, which helped keep the floor dry. "Did you find this or make it?" I asked him. "It's quite a place."

"A little bit of. The basic hovel was there for one, it was cow, very solid. I stowe it in the top for the chimney. Carried the blocks in one by one. Some I stoke, some I paid for out of my own money. Carried food in, a sack of oats at a time. Some I stole, some I paid for out of my own money." He put his hand up before I could say anything. "Now I don't want no speech about taking what's not mine," he said firmly. "I know it ain't right, but in surviving anything's fair."

"Surviving?"

"Just what I said. Everything I need to stay alive you see right here in front of you."

"What are you rehearsing for?"

"Tile," he said.

"What are you practicing? What's going to happen?"

"I'm not practicing nothing. This is it."

Hilmar started all over. I don't understand what you mean."

"I don't follow," said Hilmar, and he snorted. "Sounds like English class talk to me."

"What I mean is, the clock is at five because people are crazy enough in this world to build bombs and then threaten to use them. Hanging onto the clock means getting people together to stop being crazy, to listen to reason."

"You ever try that?"

"I hate my life on it."

"Does it work?"

I didn't answer that one right away.

"Does it work?" he repeated.

"I've got to believe it does."

"Well, that's good. That's very good. Cause we certainly need people in the world who believe the things they read in books, who believe it when they tell you on Sunday that the lion shall lay down with the lamb. But not me. I've been to town meeting in this town and listened to people argue for three hours over whether we need a sewer machine in the town office. Think the whole world's gonna agree to save everybody and put our weapons down? I have a neighbor who everytime a baseball or a football lands on his property he keeps it and calls up the county sheriff to complain about the kids. I have an aunt who never spoke to her for twenty years because of what she said when my father came home from the army with a Japanese wife. You know what I do when it's five of twelve? You want to know what I do? I get the hell out of there. That's what I leave everybody jibbering about the sewer machine, walk out the back door, and figure out how to take care of me."

It was a fine speech, more words than I guessed Hilmar had spoken in a lifetime, and it left me heartless. I didn't know what to say next, so I just asked Hilmar about the arrangements for his shelter, how he got water, what preparations had made for winter, how he kept himself hidden in hunting season when the woods continued busier. Hilmar continued his tour, showing me the spring that was his chief supply of water, and which ran fast enough, that it didn't freeze except for the coldest week or two in February. We visited a small crock brook and the sites of half a dozen or so string traps, one of which had a live rabbit snared in it. The rabbit froze as we approached it, all its fratic energy concentrated in a wild dilating of the nostrils. Hilmar squeezed it tightly by the neck and with a stout maple branch wrenched it solidly on the head. The rabbit quivered, its legs stretching stiffly, then died.

"Wanna try my rabbit stew?" Hilmar asked. He loosened the cord from around the rabbit's neck and reset the trap.

"Sure," I told him. I was impressed. I was used to a kid who seemed too big for the line I sat him in, who played the dumb farmer willing in class, who spoke plainly and briefly, only when he had to. Here he was relaxed; at home, in command. I told him so.

"I guess this is where I belong," he said, peeling back the rabbit skin and pulling off the meat like he was turning the sleeve of his jacket inside out. "This is what I know."

"You," I agreed. "How long did it take you to fix up this place?"

"Depends on what you mean. The cave itself I've known about since I was maybe thirteen. Fixed it up back then with some of this furniture you see. Don't know why I never told nobody, but I just didn't. Since maybe this fall I've been fixing it to be my base so much."

"It looks like a lot of work went into it. How long you figure you could stay here?"

"Long as I like. Long as you can stay in your house over in the east village."

Hilmar, if the war ever."

I watched Hilmar get a fire going. He put some water to boil in a leather sack, and explained that as long as it had water in it, it couldn't heat past 220 degrees, so it wouldn't burn up. He put the whole rabbit in the water, along with some dried wild herbs he had collected and some salt.

"My mom would've made this with carrots and potatoes," he said. "I suppose next thing to work on is making a garden that won't be found."

By the time we were through eating it was close to dark. I realized that Hilmar had probably been as hungry for company as he was for rabbit stew. Now I was ready to leave.

"One more problem to solve, Hilmar," I said rising.

"What's that?"

"Me. I'm going to leave now, and, much as I hate to, I'm going to have to tell your father how you find you."

Hilmar's brow tightened and his jaw fell. He looked at me hard, reaching out with great patience. "when the bombs gonna drop."

"The bomb? I don't know. I don't think today, Hilmar."

"Why not today?"

"Well. I don't think it would come without warning. I mean, nothing's happening in the world that serious that someone might drop the bombs-

"Warn somebody and he gets you first. Remember that clock you drew us on the board?"

"Clock."

"Yes," Hilmar scratched a circle on the floor of his cave. "I've got to ask a lot more people about that."

"Who said I would shoot you?"

"Me. I'm going to leave now, and, much as I hate to, I'm going to have to tell your father how you find you."

"Warn somebody and he gets you first. Remember that clock you drew us on the board?"

Hilmar stared.

"What are you talking about?"

"I've got to ask a lot more people about that.

"You see, Hilmar," I explained. "Does it work?"

I propped up his rifle in the corner.

"Who said I would shoot you?"

"Rifle's over in the corner." I told him, "where you put it when you invited me in." I got to it before he did, inspected it a moment, then handed it to him.

"Haven't the slightest idea how to use one of these things."

"Just what I thought."

Hilmar took the rifle and held it at his side. He didn't point it at me or anything.

"You see, Hilmar," I explained. "I respect what you've done here, I truly do. But there's a whole bunch of people just a couple miles from here who are worried about you. I just can't sit on a piece of information like this.

"What are you going to do?"

"No," I said, "what are you going to do? You're the one with the gun. You're the one with a year's worth of work here to protect. You going to shoot me so I won't tell?"

Hilmar stared.

"Because you show me."

Hilmar propped up his rifle in the corner and squatted by the fire. He put a new log on and poked at it, starting into the coals. A couple of minutes passed in silence.

"You don't go now?" I asked. "Why don't you go now? Why don't you bust it the hell out of here and go tell everybody in Clarks' creation how to find me. Go on.

I squatted next to him and found myself a stick to poke the fire. "Tell you what, I said finally. "I'll make you a deal."

"You've got a lot of work into this shelter, Hilmar. As far as I see it, that's what's most at stake -- keeping it. I'll give you two days. You do what you want. Sit here and watch the fire glow, take off for deeper woods, or bust yourself hiding this place to no one who's never been here before can find it. In two days I expect to see you in school. If you're there, fine. You can tell everybody you ran off to Paris, France, for all I care. I won't say a word. But if you're not, I'm running back here with a bunch of people to get you."

Hilmar poked at the fire, and left.

"Got it Hilmar?" I said, and left.

That was Saturday. Monday at school I was in the hallway at 7:30 before home-room, instead of, as usual, pushing papers at my desk and trying to figure out what to say to the twenty-five kids who were about to engage me in a staring contest. Being in the halls between classes always intimidates me and I worry that I'll feel bound to do something unpleasant, like break up a fight or pull apart a pair of shamelessly entangled lovers. But I was after Hilmar, searching over the heads of the moving crowd for his bushy-cut dark hair and his bulkiness. Finally I spotted him, leaning against the wall on the stairs so that he stood a head taller than the gathering of other farm kids whose attention he obviously commanded. I edged closer.

"And did you get to the Combat Zone?" I heard one of the boys ask, creating a
Practice Makes Perfect

Groundhogs, skunks, are heaped on the roadside
Frost's death mask, a white wax,
melts on the last leaves.
Houses wall in hoot,
padded by straw and plastic.
This cold: its signature
silence, voices smothered.
Is it any wonder I want to die?
The sun has given up too:
no point in mourning.
It is not death really,
it is living with less to hide.
No flowers delirious with color.
It is life without rhetoric:
stalk surprise in leftovers.
The sky is veined with twigs,
flushed with storms
that grip the ground.
It is Ijej when nothing is left.
A stuffed man, a sheet hung by a rope.
I learn to defy
all signs.
To take a full breath.

Bruce P. Spang
Readfield

October

Even the evergreens are turning this year, rusting on the leading edge of wind.
The pond that flooded in April is a swamp now, roiling black stumps and floating what debris spins out from the blue spruce and pine.
Yesterday the season rattled with the fall of beech leaves through sunlight, expected where we are this year of time. But not this
decay of trees that gathered snow last March on ample arms in still mornings before the rise of wind fingered journeys to the ice.
This death of constant green touches the edge of sleepy eyes with semaphores of earth's falling back once more to its molten core.

H. R. Coursen
Brunswick

leaches at Bowdoin

What

When the moment comes you'll say what.
What will fill the space until it bursts
leaving a wet balloon,
You'll say what, again.
This time the word
fizzles like a match.
As the score stands
you have one what left
and no men anywhere.
You could save it for a rainy day
but those are so often
it might be tomorrow.

Jeff Fischer
Bowdoinham

is a freelance writer and
parking great school teacher

Martha Henry
North Windham
It Helps Sometimes to Remember Galileo

(1)

It helps sometimes to remember Galileo,
the way his truth
seemed to shake the universe.

Nothing changed
except awareness.

Even now
like some medieval peasant
I watch the sun
rise in the east
and set in the west
staining the sky
with the blood of Gods.

And so it is
while my private revelations
seem to shake foundations,
still the tomatoes continue to ripen,
the grapes turn purple on the vine,
rains come and go,
nothing has changed
except awareness.

(4)

They brought the news of Galileo’s heresy
into his ninth-form math class.
He glanced at the communiqué absentmindedly,
thinking it routine schedule changes,
realized his notes
was ready to begin again,
when he understood,
and he, the most conscientious of teachers,
fled from the room
to stand alone in the hall
in the pink stickiness of his humiliation.

He knew now how long
he’d hid that knowledge from himself.
He remembered clues
that seeped through the self-deceit.

**“I could have let just myself know
I could have let myself know.”**

Sooty gargoyles, half hidden in shadow,
watch, a silent inquisition.
The priest shivers
as fear seeps through humiliation
the way the cold
of the empty hall
seeps through the coarse brown robe.

He sags into the window seat,
closes his eyes,
knows he can slide back
into not knowing.

He is up,
pacing the hall,
pounding his fist
on the curved oak table.

Already formulas
begin to float
half-formed into his mind.
He can use that knowledge.

He remembers again
nothing has changed.
He can walk back
into the room as before.
The thought is like satin
against his cheek.
He longs to stop his pacing
and lean against the satin,
that satin, he remembers,
like the pillow in rich men’s coffins.

Meanwhile the earth
relentlessly
moves around the sun.

Ruth W. Evans
Portland

does garden design & runs a BBB

Photo by Kate Carter
"RODERICK, YOU PILL-HEAD! IT'S ON THE SHELF BELOW THE MIRROR."

It's forty in the morning. June. Just getting light. Lucia is in the upstairs bathroom, getting ready. They're flying to Paris at seven.

She is a tall, athletic-looking woman of about 50 with high hips and large feet, wearing a bra and a wrist watch. She yanks out the electric toothbrush and reaches for the hot-air duct.

Downstairs, in a razor hand, bald Roderick, formerly professor of Classics at Eureka (the famous women's college), is staring hopelessly into his mirror at his face, half shaved, half in lather. Recently he had a little nervous breakdown and had to resign. The doctor says it's important that he not miss his morning pill.

Hearing Lucia calling down the hot-air duct, Roderick slowly raises his hand to the shelf, but he catches sight of himself again and resumes shaving. Lost in gloom and amazement.

He had forgotten his pill.

Ordinarily Lucia would guess.

When he first came home from the hospital it was feared he might try to harm himself. Lucia had to monitor him constantly. She's become quite an expert on Roderick's noises.

But Lucia is gawking when she should be listening for him to run the tap and fill a glass. She gazes for a full minute, tilting her head back, holding her hand out like a singer holding a note, clinging. She's rather excited this morning.

She spits, takes another pull on the mouthwash, swallows. "Aah." Slapping her belly, she grabs a pair of hairbrushes and starts brushing her hair. She stops, snickering on ear to the register.

Silence.

Staring at himself again, she concludes. He's been doing this since she took him home. With his three-month-old beard removed last week. Having deep thoughts.

"The right side of his face is the left of his reflection. And vice versa. And other important matters, needless.

"YOHOO, RODERICK! WHAT ARE YOU DOING DOWN THERE?" she sings into the register.

Roderick answers by flushing the toilet. This annoys her. It gets tiresome. If he can't have the common courtesy to... Bah, now he's got her playing his game.

"BR-RODERICK!" she bawls, tapping his big foot. She plucks a few hairs out of the gap between her eyebrows. Hairs, hairs, she has a million hairs. After a minute she hears him rinsing his razor. Good, he's getting on with the business.

She goes into the bedroom and comes back two minutes later in a lightweight grey suit and a frilly off-white voile blouse and high heels.

"I LAID YOUR CLOTHES OUT IN THE STUDY." She starts applying makeup. First she likes to lay down a good foundation.

She hears the toilet seat rattle downstairs. On the potty again. Lord Roderick contemplating the void. She looks at her watch. Five minutes.

She is putting on her eye-shadow. As a concession she's letting him wear cowboy boots. His long hair up, tied. Puffed out.

Poor Roderick. Her bristles subsides abruptly.

"Be with you in a minute," she says benevolently. She is putting mascara on.

"This demands total concentration. Next, lipstick, Roderick is good at waiting. She leaves herself critically in the mirror, then glancing fiatly at Roderick, leans forward.

"You a rich woman, Lucia," she says. "You beautiful." She kisses her reflection.

"And you sexy."

Roderick gazes wistfully at these ames. Stupid, she grabs her camera off the counter, fits a flashcube on and shoots Roderick looking at her in the mirror over her shoulder.

"Want," she says, tittering around. "How do I look?"

"How? How?" he mutters woefully. "Like an Indian chief. One who has successfully made the transition to civilization, but has chosen to dress as a woman. Women's clothing being more satisfying to his sense of display." He shows his teeth. "Chief Bigfoot."

Lucia guffaws. "That's the spirit." A flash of the old Rod, not bad. She leers at herself in the mirror. "I took a little erie this morning."

Indeed she does with her brow of a nose, wide arrogant mouth, large theatrically black eyes, and her long black hair held back by a headband. It's the eye-shadow, she decides, simpering. She's still beautiful. Big and fierce and beautiful. She's a lovely lady.

"Oh, him," she says, beaming. "Let's have a look at you."

The shirt is a little sloppy. She tucks it in evenly all round and ties his tie.

"So, how's my handsome husband this morning?"

He doesn't respond, staring at the floor.

"Not talking, mom chub?" Taking his jaw between her thumb and forefinger, she peers into his face with exaggerated sympathy and customary. "Did Wodwick have a bad night?" (She Wodwick call him.)

"I had my bad dream again. I feel like a D.P.," he croaks miserably.

"Oh, Wodwick, Wodwick, what are we going to do with you?"

Playfully, she puts blushers on his cheeks and kisses him.

"Okay, you can take my other bag down to the door. All yours, pfft."

He does so.

God knows what goes on inside his head these days. Lucia no longer tries to
understand. There are too many other things in the world to think about. Suffice it to say he's having a bad day.

She hears him go into the study downstairs, closing the door. No doubt rummaging around in the boxes of his stuff packed for storage. She told him she didn't want him doing that any more. Bah. Six boxes. Some mementoes and pictures, his chess trophies, clothes. Six boxes! His whole life in six boxes! Lucia has more than 100. Men are such paltry creatures.

She sweeps her stuff off the sink counter into a capacious canvas bag, toothbrush, razor, hairbrushes, make-up gear all higgledy-piggledy, hangs her camera round her neck, and goes downstairs. Before she forgets she must collect his shaving gear.

In her haste she doesn't notice the pill on the shelf where she put it the night before.

She goes into the kitchen and gets the food she prepared last night so they won't have to eat the airplane food. She turns off the air-conditioning, goes around checking doors and windows. At 5:05 she hears a car pull into the driveway. She goes into the study. Roderick is sitting with his face in his hands.

"The taxi's here."

The taxi-driver is a fat, black woman in slacks and a man's white shirt with the tails hanging out. She is chewing gum.

"Hey, how do you doin'? Name is Edwina," she says without looking at Roderick, grabbing his hand, quickly releasing it and taking the bags. Open-mouthed, he lifts his hand and looks at the palm. Crazing.

Lucia wishes she had a picture of that. You have to be alert all the time. It's so easy to let good shots go by.

They're off. The sun is rising over suburbia, shining between treetops and roofs. Ta-ta-ta! A new beginning.

Recently she began taking pictures of Roderick. He looks so hallucious walking around out there in the real world. She hasn't told anyone but her friend Dolly, but she's thinking of making a book of them, with amusing subtitles. Roderick, the book will be called.

Mentally she flips through her snapshots. She has some beauties. There's a real cute one of Roderick at his retirement banquet looking dismal, surrounded by women who, collectively, look like the Praesidium of the USSR in drag. RODERICK ABOUT TO BITE.

A vacant-faced Roderick with his finger in the air and his mouth open, playing checkers with his five-year-old grandson Nino. "YOU KNOW HOW MANY OF THE 485 CURRENT CHESS GRAND MASTERS ARE WOMEN? NOT ONE."

A wonderful low-angled shot of Roderick staring at himself shaving the day after she took him to the barbers. It has an eerie quality. RODERICK MEETS AN HISTORICAL PERSONAGE. Also the one she took in the bathroom this morning. IF ONLY WE DIDN'T NEED THEM FOR SEX maybe.

Cackling, she glances sideways at Roderick. Oh-oh, Roderick is not amused. She leers into her compact, snaps it to one of these days she'll have to stop taking pictures. He looks so tragic. This trip is for your own good too. We have to take care of you." She leers tenderly. "You're going to love those paisaics."

"You know, mon ami, if you kept a more cheerful expression on your face,
Bodizens we all have to bear. Besides, he’s still good at carrying things. Joke. Cruz. Lucia laughs. But it is good for him to have something to do. They reach their gate. Roderick is still weeping. Lucia hands over the tickets to one of the agents. He glances at Roderick and immediately looks again, professionally.

"Are you going to be all right, sir?"

"He'll be all right," Lucia answers. "He’s harmless. He forgets his pill the morning, ing."

The agent takes his bags, except the carry-on, and returns the tickets. Lucia turns to Roderick. "Why don’t you go poity? You’ve had a difficult time this morning. I’m afraid of you. But I want you back in 20 minutes, at 6:30. Enjoy yourself."

Fondly, she watches him shuffle off to the Men’s room down the hall on the other side from the waiting area. Poor bald Roderick, God bless him! He deserves a little treat. She goes back into the waiting area and sits down. Rapidly reorganizing her camera bag, she then takes out her knitting. She feels happy. Proud. She has a real good feeling about these days. This so-called illness of Roderick’s has shown her his true strength. She is constantly surprised at his ability to grow and change. Sometimes she thinks her life is entering a whole new phase, and she doesn’t mean menopause. God didn’t put us on earth to feel sorry for ourselves, damn! Life is too short. She intends to live it to the full.

5:30 comes and goes. Roderick doesn’t return. When bawling in five minutes is announced, Lucia goes to the door of the Men’s room. "Roderick," she calls in a sing-song, opening it a crack. No answer. She stamps. "Roderick, you come out this instant! No answer. She hears a toilet flushing continuously. She is gripped by a terrible fear. WHAT HAS HE DONE?

Trying to remain calm, she hurries to the counter. Halfway there she slips and sprawls on the floor. She recovers herself and continues running. "My husband is in the Men’s room," she says bashfully to one of the agents. "He doesn’t come out. I wonder if you could reconstitute for me."

The agent rolls his eyes around his partner; then shrugs and follows Lucia. Biting her lips, she waits outside while he gets in. A moment later he comes out. "The cowboy boobs? Go on! It’s all yours."

She goes to and looks under the doors of the stalls. Roderick is in the fourth. She grabs the top of the door and jumps, pulling and then quickly pushing until her arms are up straight, like a gymnast’s on the bar.

Roderick is sitting with his pants down, holding his trophy, sound asleep. His hand has fallen back against the flush button. The water roars monotonously. On his face is an expression of vacancy.

Lucia feels a wave of tenderness. He looks so tender. Twisting sideways, she fits a flashlight on her camera and snaps him, chuckling. She’s able to title it A HUMANIST. OR THE FREE WORLD.

Bending from the waist, she reaches down inside the door and lifts the latch, then jumps back and enters the stall.

So that’s what two pills do to him. Worth remembering.

She drops the trophy in her camera bag. She puts his cheek gently. He continues sleeping. She slips him across the face quite hard four times.

"We have to board."

"Wash!"

He puts his arms around her, pressing his cheek against her cheek. She lets him hold her for a moment. Then she gently pulls him to his feet, pulls his pants up, tucks him in, buttons him, zips him. She’s practically antiseptic.

"Lucia, I must say, you’re an amazing woman," she says to herself, winching his belt in a couple of notches.

He looks better now, she thinks happily as she walks him out to the waiting area. More color in his cheeks. A little googy, but quite steady on his feet. Definitely ambulatory. Though she does have to carry the bag on herself.

As the plane rolls down the runway, she playfully reaches over and pulls the corners of his mouth up.

"Smile, Roderick. Smile."

Paul Kleene
near Camden
For Julie, My Daughter

Today, in this brown Maine December, I thought of Karl, my father's friend (dead last year, at 90 — "I'll live 'til I die," he said the last time I saw him, "and I guess that's long enough") and the grapefruit tree that grew in his front yard, in California, 20 years ago, and I saw again the iron green leaves, the fat yellow globes, cool in my hands, and the grey bucket, where I put them, one by one.

Someday, when I am dead, I want you to hold this poem, for a moment, cool in your woman's hands.

Burt Hallen
Orono
Swarthmore UMO

Time Lapse Both Ways

For Emma, on her Tenth Birthday

Some day you'll fill heart's garden — long rows neat or ragged, many-colored or black at dawn... If they flourish it's for darkness before light, it's for roots' gamely patience — forcing you into yourself, a slow explosion of love, tissue, perennial plowing.

My daughter, my true spring-ground of clay, toads and wan weeds, bittersweet fatherly sowing— time then for you to learn how ten reaches back to one or none, how earth and night breed light.

David Walker
Freedum
Teaches part time at USM
Interview

Writing for me is not an art nor a craft. It's a runaway beast that I'm on. I revise hundreds of times. It's a lot of work. It's like a job. I have to do it. I feel a closer knowledge of Maine, . . .

The Beans of Egypt, Maine / Carolyn Chute

Carolyn Chute read sections of this novel at the Stone Coast writers' conference in the summers of 1983 and 1984, so I already knew how hilarious her style can be and how exquisitely she can recreate the tropes and rhythms of Maine speech. The real delight, as I sat down with the whole book, is proof of its masterful overall architecture. It begins with what seems like a surveying of stories about a backwoods Maine family that approximately resembles the Primal Horde from Freud's Totem and Taboo: a dominie male, a young challenger, a raft of interchangeable women and babies. Then the sprawling comic vision of the early chapters is pulled tauter and tauter by the intensifying con-specificities of Earlene Pomerule Bean, a chainsmokingseen-again with unbridled energy, that we find in the backwash of poverty: in the backwash of poverty; in the backwash of poverty; in the backwash of poverty.

The best time I can work on men characters is two months, but somehow she was . . . .

 Rather than working with the early elements, she's there. She's there. And she's there. And she's there. And she's there. And she's there. And she's there. And she's there. And she's there. And she's there. And she's there. And she's there. And she's there. And she's there. And she's there. And she's there.

Time, I feel a closer knowledge of Maine, . . .

The Beans of Egypt this Sunday afternoon, the first day of Standard Time, I feel a closer knowledge of Maine, the detail of its seasons and beliefs, the structure of the complex grief and weird laughter of its people. It's one of the best novels I've found in years. There is not a single break or fault in the sustained arc of its vision. My glue in remembering some of these scenes is like what I feel remembering scenes from Fellini's Amarcord. A man leaving a plastic bag of rabbit meat nailed to a masts door: A man showing American Chop Suey into his mouth, the individual noodles falling from his mustache. A little girl growing huge mold cultures from Dunkin Donuts in glass jars. The round of the seasons in Maine — Thanksgiving, Christmas, mud time, black [by season] — is punctuated by moments of interior, gothic revolution.

I look over the row of lights across the river in West Penobscot, and I finally understand who lives there. Beebea and Roberta Bean, Pa Bean and Lee Pomerule and Uncle Loren the pig farmer and Beal Bean and Virginia Bean and Horine Loo Bean and the dops Otis and Jet and Kaiser. I had always known them. It's just the first time I've ever seen them written down.

Review

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Bill Carpenter
Stockton Springs

Review of Charles Olson's The Maxim of the Atlantic

Carol Kontos
Windham
review

rainmakers / deborah ward
(coyote love press, 1984 $10)

a small car breaks down late one winter night. a woman writes in lipstick on a bathroom mirror, "i still love you." a mother touches her son's sunburnt skin, leaving the swollen aureole around the soul. deborah ward knows how to get inside such things, our desperate or crazy or tender moments. as she puts it, "we're all victims when it comes to the same dry facts."

in this, her long-awaited first collection, she offers us only fifteen poems, six of them one page or less. but they burn on the paper. she does not include any of her well-known series of "tendie" poems, vivid and painful parenthesis pieces. in moving beyond that persona, she deals with herself more directly, sometimes in caustic ways. family is everywhere, in the dedication, in a poem to her mother, to her son, and in a loving and heartbreaking remembrance of her deceased father. not yet at middle age, the writer is at once a daughter and mother, a lover and in one poem, a laser. she allows us to learn the roles her life has not taught her, yet observes "how old rose/working, become indelible."

mainly, this is a book about desire. how to connect with others, how to accept as authentic and satisfying what is experienced as merely real. "desire is a precious coin," she writes, "lived money." and a poem called "desire" opens: "it begins when your one hand lets loose from its sister. you say up all right, and it ends/when both halves of the brain fold themselves together. you could go mad with such desire, but the poet's voice is tough, the stanza snappy. the title poem concludes as the speaker turns to a lover in bed on a hot night, and quotes helen landau to katharine hepburn: "you gotta take my deal because it's gonna be a hot night! and the world goes crazy on a hot night."

ward's 'deal' is sometimes struck against a background of the swank language of new yorker ads: swans, caviar, chenille, chemise, tiger lilies, max factor makeup. or desperate surrealism: "stars cremate in our different skies." it is struck in nyc, maine, florida, on beaches, in beds, bathrooms, in the wash of a tv's glow. but the deal is struck: you give me life, she seems to say, and i'll show you the desire for more.

take it

terry blaskett
hallowell
b.m. at umf

on finding my father's medical school yearbook
1937

from rainmakers

how handsome you were in your sick, sinatra hair, your collar pinned under the thin knot of your tie, both my brothers' hollowed cheeks, the sincere neapolitan eyes, "member of the poetry society," it says beneath your chin. when i throw back my head to cry, i laugh like a waterfall.

i know you too well. for just half my lifetime, yet you gave me the lyrics to life, like birds uplifting my life, all my life, all of broadway! maries the librarian, henery Higgins, officer krupke, gypsy rose lee — and all of Al Jolson in black face

down on one knee at the annual country club fair. i can see hundred dollar bills in the air when you acced the steepleschase at roosevelt raceway. those clan-like birthday parties in ballrooms with beaded curtains, floating accordions, the gaudy rented spaces of astoria, queens. you jammed six of us in your bed sunday nights to watch Gummere. you commanded us to kiss the ground of each state when you drove us cross-country. oh

high-strung Italian ancestors from brooklyn, you raised this man into my destiny! this man whose father carried oranges and avocados through little Rudy. this man who practiced surgery as an art — and i start in remembering that ordinary day in our suburban backyard, not six months from the sudden end. he stopped me and held me, telling me Loyalty and Truth were the only virtues worth knowing. not knowing himself, all the time, they conflicted like fire and ice, like liquor and pills, the impossible compromises i wouldn't realize

for fifteen years — that would corner and claim him and kill him and take him from me.

deborah ward

portland

operators available books in portland
North Into Love / David Adams
(Queeny Press, Box 176, Hallowell, Maine 04347, 1980, 48.00)

Back when I was poetry editor of the Maine Sunday Telegram I accepted every poem that David Adams submitted. As I read North Into Love, lovingly produced by Quarry Press, I get that seldom-given chance to celebrate my own good judgement.

The book is divided into two sections: I. The Underurban Lines, and II. North Into Love. While part I is ostensibly about Ohio, a lot of memory flows from other places down the silver trolley-lines, and while part II is usually about Maine, a lot of Ohio crosses over into Adams’s stark milltown glimpses. And it couldn’t be otherwise. Those of us not from Maine impose our visions of where we grew up upon where we try to grow, or just stay alive.

Ohio is where I remember being and wanting to get away from — the simultaneous disasters of the Sam Shepherd trial, the ‘24 Series, and the thighs of the Cayahoga River. But then one reads Sherwood Anderson, or David Adams. Here is Adams’s Ohio:

“There are no visible lives in the map of the lines. Those who hoped to go somewhere more quickly ... sleep dreamless in the silent groves.” 
empty tracks ... planet with red earth and ovens! and the dead root of pine needles. “the sun ... a sturbing film/ setting on the black couplings ... in the mustard light of an old caboose.” “Everything unrolls the heat ... the grey hand spread out like a door knocked down ... Ohio going to like a grey sea ... cold Erie sensed as wind ... this Duffer songs/s or scenes on an interstate hidden by trees.”

That is a pastiche of many poems, but it may give a sense of the unanny accuracy, the “Fireness” with which David Adams captures his Ohio. It may still seem a place to get away from, but it is a place where a poet finds images, and communicates the life of the place, forcing us to return or just to be there.

This is everyone’s enemy — love — invented by a satan known as God to keep poets staring just beyond the borders of Plato’s Reich. Adams’s touch is delicate, often androgynous, as in another pasricle: “we have desensitized our flesh and weighed! the silent accumulation of distance into what is years, what is mine/ and what is left ... ! am what I see, as you were never.” (Note the power of “you were never”.) “The way my hands shrink to January dizziness and my finger moves in its cold ring.” (The gestapo-like cell of marriage). And like all the other things, “your wild song/ only for the water to learn your flesh men would not learn.” And in Maine, a fisherman’s wife, doing the dishes as she waits for his return from the sally chop of the ocean — “her hands still in grey water.” And in Maine, a marriage pulled apart by these differing points of view. “Stormy read the skies all spring, predicting tourists like grain. Cecile saw winter beyond all that, her own blank dreams.” And because Cecile dreams her blankness, she wins, but at the price of that same office wherein patience preys on itself and all the others close to the web, “as if they had left the night from different ends.” Yes, but then, “As I cannot solve the gestiveness of you stepping out of your slacks.” And yes; “you held your coffee cup in both hands/ leaning forward about to say something.” Yes you pursue, to that rare woman willing to forgive a man for being one. And yes to “Winter Laundry” which I leave to the reader for her or his absolute wonder.

Sometimes, David Adams does not know when his poems are over. “To J. Robert Oppenheimer, Sept. 4, 1983” ends powerfully with “when did you understand?”

But we, at least, will understand more about ourselves from these poems, no matter where we are, where we have been. The photograph on the back cover shows David Adams, wind-swept, looking out upon stormy waves. The coast of Maine! No — look more closely. It is a breakwater overlooking Lake Erie. Like the photograph, the poems insist, as good poems always do, that we look more closely.

H. R. Courser
Brunswick
Writers at Work

North Into Love

“If only I knew how to tell you,
Someday I may know how.”
— James Wright

Language burned to silent crust.
Still your name tastes like nothing else I’ve ever loved.
Not Ohio. Something else.
Distance.

A little on we inspect the ponds for frogs,
guess at the names of shrubs,
transversing a green geometry, like
a dream through a dream.

There is something I want to say to you,
Remember that. So I lift a branch
amazed to see the endless fields flying by
the summer road where the sun is a red star
sleeping in the corn, burning the wheat
to a dark sea, burning the ponds to black ash

It is only a dream from Ohio
that is lost. Here,
I give you my best, luminous Ohio dream
which I loved because I was alone,
because I was falling to you more quickly
than the light of the dream.

And here I am. I step into your shadow
a little more like making love;
I think the sun is not sufficient
to be a clock of the lights I tell you of,
how a how in a boatneck collar and plaid shorts
waiting at the rendezvous, makes his first
northern wish. A smile now.
The sun is in your hair, and the breeze
plays in your hair.
We walk silently away, as imprint
of your sandal on the moosy grass.
So I give you these unperfected lights,
my dreams caught up at last.

My language, my wish, my real words

to tell you wait in the warm seat,
in your shadow, upon a season. Here.
The way I lean to you.

David Adams
Strongsville, OH

Ought at UAF, currently a
medical writer in Cleveland.
REVIEWS

The Great Day / John Tagliabue
Poems. 1962-1983

(Alenimb Press, Plainfield, Indiana 46168, 1984, $7)

Some writers are so thoroughly themselves that their work should be read carefully and deeply, but not limted. Joyce was one. Hemingway another. And John Tagliabue. His amazing emotional openness, expressed in an equally amazin openness of form, feels friendly, funny, easy-going, but in the end may be a risky model for younger writers. Reading through this collection is like going with the writer to one of the scores of airports he's flown through searching the suitcases round and round — each a different size, shape, color, with stickers from around the world, each packed with surprising, offbeat personal stuff. The problem for us is that he is such a good writer he makes making poems seem easy. You just pick your suitcase and pack it with almost anything that is engaging you at the moment. It is not a problem for Tagliabue: it is his strength. The thing is, not many people are simply not as interesting as he is, as bucolic, as educated, as varied. His forms follow his ideas. They are like these expandable suitcases — as big, as open, as accommodating as the materials at hand. Not a cluttered attic, not Flapper McGee's closet. The forms stretch to hold the content exactly, and not a whit more.

Impeccably, he recalls Whitman. But also Blake, Charles Ives, William, and in his wit, in what he admits into his work, and in the Oriental influence, Gary Snyder. As with these writers, often it is hard to tell where prose ends and poetry begins; the reader lives in a poetic 'atmosphere,' and the poem slips along with one foot on each side of the line. He quotes Yeats: "The purpose of rhythm... is to prolong the moment of contemplation." A world traveler, Tagliabue asks us to contemplate with him the wonders of life almost everywhere, in Mexico, Columbia, Greek islands, even Andros, Ontario, he asks us "to arrive at the breazy condition of a tacit wanderer." He has been willing to go everywhere to find out what life is, how it takes the chance. In one poem, he quotes Theodore Roethke: "To write poetry you must be prepared to die.

Can we ask for more? Has he gone out to the world in order to let it in. "My wife and I," he writes, "travels in love." Everywhere, he searches for "The newness of the poem that is in any person."

The Great Day is not just a super's book; it is an event. These 157 pages of writing represent a cuiling of 21 years of work, and are an incredible buy at $7. Tagliabue, now 81, is a professor of English at Bates College. Has a professor ever written less academic poems? He carried his considerable learning lightly, it illumines his considerable living. The living, in turn, humanizes the learning. It is what we should all grow toward. Everywhere there is the joke, the joke, the joke de vivre. Amidst all the risk, he seems incapable of despair; qually all the more impressive in some of the later poems fearless with darker touches of age. "Like a primitive person," he says, "I must follow my prayer wherever it goes... I cannot let it get away from me; otherwise we would die."

E. B. White: A Biography / Scott Edelide
(W. W. Norton, New York, 1984, 400 pages, $22.50)

Biography, the historian Phillip Gareau wrote, "is like big game hunting, one of the recognized forms of the sport, and is unfair as only a sport can be."

Unfortunately Edelide is unfair. This at least might have given enough to his biography. He just never decided what it was he was hunting. We are strewn in thickets of trivia, follow him as he discharges his air rifle in all directions, and end up with our quarry escaped. This first biography of E. B. White is a solemn bore and will satisfy only those who like to go walking in the evening in middleclass suburbs in order to peer into the lighted windows of their neighbours.

Granted we read biographies for a number of reasons — for an historical perspective, as a social document, as aesthetic criticism. And there is, of course, the curiosity in all of us. The trouble with this biography is that lack of a personal response to a writer and his works which must underlie all good biography. One recalls bowen on Oliver Wendell Holmes, Ellmann on Joyce, Boswell on Johnson, Bollis's Twelve Against the Gods. It is not a question of the literary stature of E. B. White. He is a consummate writer. But surely in 400 pages we could be given a trifle more than the character of a parent. Too much of the book is a remarkably uneventful life. Indeed, White's life here becomes a social document on a way of life not uncommon for the well-to-do American male of our century. However, that not being Edelide's intent, the social aspect remains peripheral.

E. B. White's real biography is in his writing, in One Man's Meat, Stuart Little, Charlotte's Web, The Second Tree From the Corner, in all the pieces we've read over the years in "The New Yorker". The Elements of Style is part of his metaphysics, Too interspersed in this homely biography do we hear the sound of crockery shattered or the stray odor of human voice or scents of being human.

Gordon B. Clark

The Maine Massacre / Janwillem van de Wetering

(Pocket Books, New York)

When I came across a review of The Maine Massacre by the Dutch mystery writer Janwillem van de Wetering, I was intrigued. I only knew his wonderful book on Zen, The Empty Mirror. A Dutch buddhist who lives in Surry, Maine, writing about heinous crimes?

While browsing in a bookstore I found his trilogy. The Mind Murders, and set a weekend aside to read about murderous deeds in the city of my birth. I was delighted! Few books use the Amsterdam I know so well as background. I lived running behind the hatted old Volkswagen of the city police: every street name familiar; even the characters a few people. So I hoped, I could have modeled on a high school friend of mine who right now is one of Amsterdam's finest and vaimest, I was hooked! Being a Dutch woman who had lived for years in Maine, it was impossible not to go on to The Maine Massacre.

Suzanne Oudlik has recently lost her husband. Long-suffering, and self-centered, she asks her brother, chief of the municipal homicide division, to come to Maine's fictional Woodstock County to settle her estate. She wants to go home. Her whole life in America, decades it appears, has been one of cultivated homesickness: a danger known to all immigrants. It is safer to hold on to the past than to embrace a new country. De Gier, playing "nurse maid" to his aging boss, follows him to Maine.

The policemen learn more about Cape Greca in a few weeks than Suzanne has learned in years. She does not know her neighbors near seems to have noticed the wild beauty. Maps show Maine to lay on Spain's latitude, but when they arrive in December they discover right away that their clothing is pitifully inadequate. They cannot drive on snow and ice. They realize that Maine has everything the Netherlands does not. "A bay. Hills. Mountains even. Gun-toters. Corpses, Laveni in outshined uniforms." They meet a drunken French Canadian woodcutter: a crooked real estate agent; a hench on an Island (Maine's). They speak Dutch to each other in a clothing store and are asked "Did I hear you speak Canadian just now?" They are bewildered by the redundancies of the Maine idiom, the BMF. And, for example, the chief asks de Gier, "Do you know what BMF stands for?" "It is for bad air. M is mother." "And E?" "A four letter word." "Ah... I see. How interesting. To have intercourse with the mother would be the ultimate bad thing to do, I suppose... but to name the worst and then to add bad..."

The Maine Massacre is not only a very satisfying mystery story, it is also a story about adaption to a foreign land. And, in some ways, an explanation of why a Dutchman would want to settle here.

Clara Shroeder

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(Pocket Books, New York)

When I came across a review of The Maine Massacre by the Dutch mystery writer Janwillem van de Wetering, I was intrigued. I only knew his wonderful book on Zen, The Empty Mirror. A Dutch buddhist who lives in Surry, Maine, writing about heinous crimes?

While browsing in a bookstore I found his trilogy. The Mind Murders, and set a weekend aside to read about murderous deeds in the city of my birth. I was delighted! Few books use the Amsterdam I know so well as background. I lived running behind the hatted old Volkswagen of the city police: every street name familiar; even the characters a few people. So I hoped, I could have modeled on a high school friend of mine who right now is one of Amsterdam's finest and vaimest, I was hooked! Being a Dutch woman who had lived for years in Maine, it was impossible not to go on to The Maine Massacre.

Suzanne Oudlik has recently lost her husband. Long-suffering, and self-centered, she asks her brother, chief of the municipal homicide division, to come to Maine's fictional Woodstock County to settle her estate. She wants to go home. Her whole life in America, decades it appears, has been one of cultivated homesickness: a danger known to all immigrants. It is safer to hold on to the past than to embrace a new country. De Gier, playing "nurse maid" to his aging boss, follows him to Maine.

The policemen learn more about Cape Greca in a few weeks than Suzanne has learned in years. She does not know her neighbors near seems to have noticed the wild beauty. Maps show Maine to lay on Spain's latitude, but when they arrive in December they discover right away that their clothing is pitifully inadequate. They cannot drive on snow and ice. They realize that Maine has everything the Netherlands does not. "A bay. Hills. Mountains even. Gun-toters. Corpses, Laveni in outshined uniforms." They meet a drunken French Canadian woodcutter: a crooked real estate agent; a hench on an Island (Maine's). They speak Dutch to each other in a clothing store and are asked "Did I hear you speak Canadian just now?" They are bewildered by the redundancies of the Maine idiom, the BMF. And, for example, the chief asks de Gier, "Do you know what BMF stands for?" "It is for bad air. M is mother." "And E?" "A four letter word." "Ah... I see. How interesting. To have intercourse with the mother would be the ultimate bad thing to do, I suppose... but to name the worst and then to add bad..."

The Maine Massacre is not only a very satisfying mystery story, it is also a story about adaption to a foreign land. And, in some ways, an explanation of why a Dutchman would want to settle here.

Clara Shroeder
To Ken 1974-1980

Under the Christmas tree
He was found
Gasp and singled
As a scalded, unwrapped present,
Biting flames, yellow tongues
Licking the flooring,
Flesh stinking and charred
The odor oppressing.
Outside the slight, scarred bundle
Was delivered to
The trembling arms
Of his sobbing father.

Children entered, re-echoing
The hideous affair.
Discussing Heaven, their seats pulled
Into the Magic Circle
Like a giant, veined halo.
Their only concern now—
"Who will open our thermos bottles?"

Carla Lake
Auburn

carla lake teaches kindergarten
Car Poems

Starting the Subaru at Five Below

After 6 Maine winters and 100,000 miles, when we take it to be inspected we search for gas stations where they just say beep the horn and don't ask us to put it on the lift, exposing its soft rusted underbelly. Inside is the record of commuting: apple cores, a bag from McDonald's, crushed Dunkin' Donuts cups, a flashlight that doesn't work and one that does, gas receipts blurred beyond recognition. Finger tips numb, nose hair frozen, I pump the accelerator and turn the key. The battery cranks, the engine gives 2 or 3 low groans and starts. My God it starts. And unlike my family in the house, the job I'm headed towards, the poems in my briefcase, the dreams I had last night, there is no question about what makes sense. White exhaust billowing from the tail pipe, heater blowing, this car is going to move me, it's going to take me places.

Stuart Kestenbaum
Portland, Maine
staff member of Maine State Commission on Arts and Humanities

'51 Ford — In Reverse

Feel like
  I touched the moon
And she touched me back.
The night my brother brought home the '51 Ford:
  no sticker;
  tail lights the size of pen lights;
  interior ripped away
  ripping away years of memories
  opening a rusty back door to childhood:
  a yard full of tripods, and engines, and tools.
I'm a backseat driver in my own dreams saying "turn left, turn right, yield."
In a '51 Ford with no brakes.
In a memory with only tail lights showing.
I keep hearing the dream downshifting into the past.
I keep seeing tail lights sliding just out of view.

Jan Johnston
Wintrop
is the car laureate of Maine
A Friendly Church
Where Christ Is Exalted

I used to hitchhike a lot when I was in my late teens and going to college in a remote, northern spot in New England, and I would always curse, pol- lute, profane, and whosesever so was the stop to pick me up. Now I'm in my thirties, and I have a nice car, and I don't usually stop either. My wife does. She still gets letters from a young Georgian who fell in love with her in one five-hour trip. And she and I both get letters, at odd intervals from around the globe, from a nineteen-year-old woman who my wife brought home for what turned out to be a really enjoyable week. Still, usually, I don't stop. I've had other experiences.

But the woman struggling through the snowdrifts—I felt sorry for her. The wind was strong across the black spruce trees, sleet. The snow was piled up on the windows, the snow was piled up on the cars, the snow was piled up on the roofs. I saw a church in a little settlement in the spruces. A sign hanging from a wooden arm was nearly brand-new, "I go on a walk in the woods. Catholic church! They're just like a family, you know. A fellow church. And a mother church. And baby churches. Or sister churches. Or suppose it's sister and brother churches, really—there's men that go to church too. But... no. Sister churches, that's really what it is. Ever with the men.

"Let me guess. The Catholic church is the mother, right?" I laughed.

"And the Pentecostals, that's the father. The Baptists, they're sisters."

"I know a couple of Pentecostals," I said. "from work."

"Pentecostals love animals," she said firmly. "Worship animals. It's a sin to kill animals."

"Not the Pentecostals I know," I said. "In fact, one of them raises pigs."

"Yes," she smiled broadly. "So, are you vegetarian?"

"Yes," she smiled broadly. "So."

"Is that a joke?" I asked. "I don't understand. She didn't answer. "But how do you mean to eat?"

"By eating the meat, you forgive the man who killed the animal, you forgive him his sin. And by loving him. You make it all right."

"Hum," I mumbled. "When I mentioned this to my son later, he saw it as a 'religious' thing— he's very advanced for twelve, my son. "She just wants to eat meat," he said. But I saw the sense of it. "So what else can Pentecostals eat?"

"I asked. "The road continued to be slippery and snowy; the sky looked like a dirty reflection of the dizzying ground."

"Bread," she said. "It's all right to eat bread."

"And what else? The Bible says we don't live by bread alone."

"And wine. And meat—l'mow, if an animal dies. With the wine, it depends on what brand you drink. You know, like Chablis. But what I like, I like a good Burgundy. You don't have to be so refined."

"No, I don't. I don't let people smoke in my car anyway. I used to smoke, but then I gave it up, and now the smoke just makes me feel sick."

"That's the point. The point they put in cigarettes. And the paper. It's so thick. You burn that, one day's enough! The cigarette.

"What? I asked, but she didn't answer right away, and I decided to let it drop."

"Oh, just thinking about something that happened in the last bar last night," she said. "What is it? Thursday? Yup, they'll be all in the bars tonight. Drinking. Drinking's all right, though. Wine. It's medicine."

"Wine makes glad the hearts of men, right?"

"Milk, that's what you had for you. Good cows. What you go to do is drink three or four glasses of wine. Till you throw up. Get rid of all that milk. It comes right out the ends of your hair. Makes your hair grow, milk. That's all it is for. Breast-feeding. Wine is good for babies. That's what I feel mine. Wine. They're good. I've got two of them. David and Robin. We call them Bobby, for short. They're lovely, so smart. Yup. Kids are better than their parents. They don't make the same mistakes."

"No, just different ones," I said. "And not even new ones, necessarily. I thought of my parents. And their parents and their parents. When my thoughts culminated with Eva, and Adam, I laughed.

"Nope. They're better. Richer anyway. Smarter. She shifted in her seat. "Mine are so smart. I just tell them all my troubles. They help me, they see things in a different way."

"I thought, "That's not fair, to burden a kid with your troubles. But then I thought of what I shared with mine. So how old are your kids?" I asked.

"Two and one."

"Oh, babies," I laughed.

"Yeah. They're a blast, my kids. She shook her head. "The road was now going around Whispered Heads, and spruce and boulders and snow were all we could see. "Beautiful. I'm going to have more. Not right now, though."

"No, that's a good idea," I felt some kind of societal responsibility to dissuade her. "Hard to support them. And they've all sorts of work kids. I could hear my wife's tones in my words, and I was thinking of this woman who killed the animal."

"No, not mine. They're so sweet. They. I let them live with the other side of the family. I was afraid I'd drop them. Their father, now, he can pick them up, better than I can. I just got married. I might drop 'em, see? But they worship me, my kids. They love me and I love them."

"Was that who you were yelling Downstairs?" I asked, of course I felt sad.

"you know, water, that's bad for you too. Too heavy."

I laughed.

"Jesus had ohs in his hands," she said. "He could purify the water into wine."

"That's a pretty good chemistry trick, purifying water into wine with oil."

"Oh, no trick," she said, and she felt silent. After a few miles she perked up.

"Astrology, do you know astrology? I'm Aquarius. What are you?"

"Libra."

"Ah, scales, an air sign, yes. Good with music. Very talented. Yes. Let me see your fingers."

"I held out my right hand. "Yes," she said. My fingers were a lovely yellow-white from clenching the steering wheel; I told myself to relax, that it was the tires, not my hands, that were going to hold the car on the road. "I can see your bones," she said. "Good fingers like that. I can play the piano, my fingers are too short. Oooh, ladies play the piano, they got such lovely long fingers, I bet they don't even know what they got."

"To tell you the truth," I said, "I can't even remember five notes in a row. Even not to whistle or hum."

"I can. I'm good with clarinet. I picked it up, and it was like I already knew how in my fingers. Like I was born with it," she chuckled. "Fact, I was born with it. Air sign, see?"
“No, Aquarius is the water-bearer, you must be a water sign,” I said.

“Oh, no. I’m not. I just work with the water. Carry it. But I am junior the thirteenth, that’s my birthday.”

Then I thought of my sister. That had been her birthday, too. Or the thirty-first. And she’d been an Aquarius, of course, my sister who’d been studying in India and becoming a Sanskrit scholar until she died, young, of cancer.

“Wow, ah, sis...”

“I’m not like Cancer,” the woman interrupted. “I just work with the water. Carry it. They live in it. There was a long silence. ‘They all meet in Hell. Grab people with their claws.’”

“Cancers?”

“They’re heavy people. Them and Sagittarius, they meet in Hell. Make love. Except Cancer’s too heavy. Unless Cancer’s a woman. So she can be underneath. My mother. I don’t know. They pick them up with their claws, crash them. Then they send them back to earth.”

“Other people, you mean?”

“Cancers and Sagittarius. He likes murder in the night-time. She likes it in the day. He’s the order, the day and the tree. She’s the transmission came up into the back seat. Course he didn’t know. He asked could he borrow the car. And I said yes, I didn’t know. He knew he was a good driver.”

“Did he take off too fast? Or hit a bump or something?”

“No. Course he didn’t know. Just sat down. He didn’t know the floor wouldn’t hold him. It’s in the shop still. I just don’t have the money to get it out. When I do, I’ll get my car back again. It’s an Opel.”

“A friend of mine had an Opel, and she loved it. She said you could drive five hundred miles in a day and still be comfortable. But her sex wrecked it. He took the car, he was fifteen, and he went drinking with some friends, and they went off the road at nearly a hundred miles an hour.”

“Yes, there are some people love the speed limit. Other people drive fast. That’s their limit. I guess. You, I can tell you drive fast.”

“Not me.” I laughed. “My mother. She says, you know. ‘She’s the one that’s having to drive.’”

“Then you ask her to drive.”

“Why?”

“She knows. I’ve told her. She keeps between her knees. But she kept on looking straight ahead.”

“Astrology. I’m just learning all this stuff. Chess. Cards. Cards is all astrology.”

“How’s that? With the different signs, you mean?”

“No. I don’t know. Chess. You know. Those are the all the games astronomers say. This is a little car. What is this, a Subaru? That’s a little nice car. A Subaru. My cousins have one. Four-wheel drive. They go skiing up in the mountains all the time. My mother’s got a Mustang. Me, I like little cars more. Good for the city.”

“Yeah, they’re easier to park and they’re cheaper.”

“No. My mother doesn’t have to worry I’d steal her car. She couldn’t leave the keys right in it, I don’t even want it. I used to have a car. But I lost it to a friend. I’d given him the transmission came up into the back seat. Course he didn’t know. He asked could he borrow the car. And I said yes, I didn’t know. He knew he was a good driver.”

“It’s not hard to find. Just take it.”

“No. Course he didn’t know. Just sat down. He didn’t know the floor wouldn’t hold him. It’s in the shop still. I just don’t have the money to get it out. When I do, I’ll get my car back again. It’s an Opel.”

“Are you sure you want to drive?”

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“Yes, there are some people love the speed limit. Other people drive fast. That’s their limit. I guess. You, I can tell you drive fast.”

“Not me.” I laughed. “My mother, does too much. Eighty or ninety, that’s how fast she drives.”

“My mother,” she drives twelve miles an hour. And that’s beat for her. Course she’s got that big car. On those little roads.”

“So it’s your mother who lives Downeast? I guessed.

“Yes.” She chuckled and then was silent.

“So, how was your visit? Was her house warm enough? It’s been pretty cold all this past week.”

“Oh, yes, it’s all new. Now electric heat. With thermostat. One in every room. My mother. She’s eccentric. She was enthusing about the cold. Or about the heat, you know, that I left it on. I can’t keep up with my mother. I love her. But I can’t keep up with her. Aren’t the trees pretty, all that snow on the branches? She’s got a beautiful ceramic Christmas tree looks like that. I’d love to have that. Little bulbs, you know. They’re pink. It all tied together with a red ribbon.”

“You’d better tie a knot in your Christmas stocking. Or you might forget. Or she might. She’s not even know you want it, unless you ask.”

“Oh, she knows. I’ve been asking for that tree for years.” She stopped talking for a minute. “I get a lovely house, I’ll ask her to come live with me. Just so I can have that tree.”

“You must love it.” I teased. “I thought you couldn’t stand living with her.”

“Ooh, no. I can’t stand the house. I’ve got to be the boss. I can’t live with her except in my house, where I’m the boss. My parents, I tol’ my sister, because she swears you right to death, the other leaves you so lonesome you could cry.”

“So your mother and father both live Downeast?”

“Ooh, no. She’s got a lovely husband. They do everything together. Have fun. They’ll live a long time.”

“So where does your father live?” I asked.

“Oh. Yes.” She hummed a little. “He’s a Cancer. He’s a Cancer. Her eyes fixated on a car coming toward us in the other lane, both cars trying to keep wheels on the clearer pavement in the middle. Yip, yip! We almost made love.”

I unclenched my hands. “Love at forty miles an hour isn’t much fun, though,” I quipped. Again that uncomfortably charged silence fell. “What exactly in hell are you trying to provoke here?” I thought to myself. And I concentrated on my driving.

“Yes, my mother,” she laughed. “She doesn’t need me, she’s got lots of friends.”

“Does she say that to you? I mean, you can have lots of friends and still really need your family?” I thought of my sister’s bedside and the people shed been with till the end.

“No, she doesn’t say that.”

“We drove on in silence and negotiated five or six sharp turns along the shores of a small boulder-strewn lake.”

“Yes. Children, they cry for their mothers,” she said.

“I drove around another turn before saying, ‘And mothers sometimes cry for their children.’”

“No, No. Mine are so smart. I love ’em. They got my eyes. Lovely eyes. Dark-brown. And my mother’s hair. Raven-black. And long and curly.”

“Where do they live?” I asked. It was true; her eyes were dark-brown. But I couldn’t see whether they were lovely — they were still looking straight ahead.

“I’m from New Hampshire,” she said. “I told you that. With the other side of the family. I got a girlfriend down there I stay with.”

“And you hitchhiked all the way up here from New Hampshire? In this kind of weather?”

“No, I took a bus,” she explained. “I’d buy that tree from my mother. But it took all my money to get up here. It’s either take a bus up here. Or take one back. It’s either one way or the other. It doesn’t make much difference.” She was quiet. We were coming into small towns along the highway. Ellsworth was only a few miles ahead. “I’ll have to get a job. I suppose. Factory work. I like factory work, it’s nice. It’s good work.”

“Listen,” I said. “I’m going to have to loan you out pretty soon. Do you know that corner, that bar Harbor corner with that great, big American flag in Ellsworth, at the Ford dealer’s. I’m going to have to let you out there. I’m going the other way, to the Subaru dealer’s. I’ll be a couple of hours, for a tune-up.”

“Oh, that’s all right,” she said. “It’s been lovely.” She started shifting around in her seat, getting ready. “You have any change for the toll?”

“Just those pennies on the dash there. There must he enough there. That’s all I got left on wine last night,” she said.

“Well, it’s medicine.” I laughed. “The Penicillins I know drank so much medicine before they joined the church that it nearly killed them. So they gave them up, and cigarettes, and swearing too. But not meat.”

“Bay, the heat in here.” She regained her composure and sighed heavily. “Cook you right to death. Oh, look, that’s lovely. There’s McDonald’s. I can get my coffee right there.”

“I stopped at the red light, across the street from the huge flag, which was billing ‘Cat’s Cradle’ at least twenty feet in the snowy wind.”

“Lovely,” she said, and she pulled her coat tight again and picked her bag up into her lap. For the first time I noticed her boots were on the wrong feet. She opened the door. “Thanks now,” she said, and she pushed herself off the seat and out of the car.

“Take care,” I called out.

She leaned back in. “And may God bless you,” she said slowly, firmly. Her brown eyes seemed to focus right through me, and I couldn’t tell if they were lovely. She slammed the door hard, and then pushed against it with her hip a little.

She crossed the street against the red light and tried, without success, to climb over the snowbank to the sidewalk. The stream of traffic slowed, then crept along beside her as she turned and walked down the middle of the lane toward McDonald’s. A big, yellow backhoe was parked in the middle of the road, digging a hole and blocking traffic from passing around her. A pump was seen hurling snow over the road. The trees were covered with snow, mixed with snow, was running deep along the curb in a storm drain. She gathered up her coat and her bag and splashed along in her black, plastic boots. I could see her lip moving as she talked to herself. She turned and walked up the McDonald’s driveway, and the cars started to speed up and pull on past. She pulled open the heavy, sticky door, and, behind the tinted brown glass, she disappeared.

**William Love**

Lubec

is a free-lance writer and outdoorsman.
A Children's Story...  

Your Word Against Mine

In Digglespoon County one summer morning a trader with a turban and a pop-
corn cart came driving his cowcart up the lane. He was eating black pickles
dipped in salt, so that the crows knew he was up to no good.

"Are those Shakespeare plays?" asked the trader softly, clearing the basket
off his lap. "I've seen them before, but I can't quite place them."

"Bring them over here, sir," said the schoolteacher, stepping out of the school-
house door. "I've wanted to read them for some time."

"But you've read them already?"

"Yes, but--"

"Perhaps if you traded them for a good part, you would be more interested in
reading them again."

"But, miss, are not dogs?" answered the trader after removing her knuckle
from her mouth.

"But they're wagging their tails," said the trader, quietly taking one of the pop-
corn cob and driving his cowcart on.

"And if you traded them for a good part."" asked the trader, "you would be
more engaged in reading them, I'm sure."

"No, wait!" cried the actor, sweeping up the basket with all his might. "The
trader gave his knuckle to the schoolteacher's face, and then, as if
before the trader could protest, the cowcart was rumbling up the lane.

"What are you going with so many dogs?"

"But, miss, are not dogs?" answered the trader after removing her knuckle
from her mouth.

"But they're wagging their tails," said the trader, quietly taking one of the pop-
corn cobs onto his lap. "Can they run after a ball?"

"Oh, no, they can't do any tricks," she replied, downcast.

"Tell you what: I'll give you the pick of the litter for those old dogs there."

"Mind you: pick of the litter?"

"You have something to trade?"

"Nothing... of my own," she replied, downcast.

"And with that, he pulled out his knife, cut the rope holding a wooden
basket to the cart, and spilt its contents of garbage and trash all over the
road at the little girl's feet.

"Pick of the litter! Ha-ha-ha!" he laughed like poppy seeds exploding in an
open fire. And as the little girl began sobbing, he was away down the road like
a whirlwind chasing a pig across a pasture.

It was not long before he came to a miller pulling a haunch cart
headed with a heavy pine wheel. The man was sweating so much he was
cursing so much he was sweating.

"Hullo, my tired good friend!" called the trader, stopping, "Is something
wrong?"

"Door wide open!" answered the miller, his face
through a crack in his door. "No one in the mill except the dogs."

"Nothing. I can make good use of it just as is. But the sun grows high and
my horse begins to look for something to eat."

"Oh, yes, yes, of course. Oh, certainly, let us trade then. Here, let me tie my
cow cart to the back of your wagon."

"Good. And let me give you to know, the trader, spying suddenly down
the side of the road where he swiftly gathered several handfuls of purple
flowers, "your flock?" Then as he whipped his cow down the road, the sound
of his laughter ricocheted like popcorn in a stove top.

After the next hill, the trader found a farmer standing with his work
horse at the edge of his field. While

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open fire. And as the little girl began sobbing, he was away down the road like
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behind him. "Maybe I can help you. Do you have a stream nearby?"

"In fact, I do."

"One that runs even in the dry season?"

"Even so, I watered my horse there this very morning."

"Does it seem, then," said the trader, and his eyes glowed with a faint green fire, "that you lack only a turbine. What will you swap for mine?"

"I have only this horse with which I farm."

"As a miller, you would not farm, or need the horse, any longer."

"Why, you are right about that! And as a miller, I would still have time to get ready for the farmers' harvest."

"And the man began to dance a little jig for joy.

"So it is a deal, then," crowed the trader through a smile that could freeze blood on a summer day, "your horse in exchange for my turbine."

"Agreed, here, let me hitch my horse up to pull your cart."

"And together they removed the trader's cow from the harness and tied her on behind and put the horse in her place. Only then did the farmer suddenly see his predicament: "But how shall I move my new turbine to the stream? It is so heavy."

"What? Heavy?" cracked the trader, unwinding the cloth from around his head.

"Surely you can lift this turbine with only one hand!" With which he hurled the limp material to the farmer's feet and, laughing like popcorn trying to fly, his hat fell, his trousers came unbuttoned and he bounded away up the road out of sight.

Not far beyond the next bend, the trader found a captain of the guards resting in the shade of an overhanging tree. When he saw the trader's new horse, the captain leaped to his feet and pulled off his great hat in a gesture of greeting.

"Hello, my enemy of my enemies!" countered the trader. "I can see in your eagerness that you want something I have."

"You must be a good trader, for you are correct," observed the captain. "I am traveling the countryside to buy horses for the army.

"And you need just such as I have?" suggested the trader.

"Just such."

"Perhaps I can do even better for you. Would you like a... pair?" And as he spoke, the trader made of his eyes two hamburger.

"Do you have a pair, then?" asked the captain, growing excited."

Within easy reach replied the trader in a voice like horses cracking.

"Then what do you ask in return? The Queen's army will pay fairly."

"Only the captain's fur hat, which I fancy," said the trader.

"It is as good as done. Here is the hat. Now show me this fine, fine pair."

"Without delay!" shouted the trader, and, curling back his whip, he sent it snapping into the branch directly above the captain's head. Out fell a ripe yellow teardrop-shaped fruit: "Your fine, fine pear, Commander! Ha-ha! Git up there! Ha-ha-ha!" he cried and laughed with the sound of popcorn splitting loudly inside a hollow caisson.

And before the captain could recover, the trader had disappeared up the road in a cloud of dust.

Only a mile further on, he stopped abruptly when he encountered a beautiful old woman in a small dark wood. She was wearing a grass-green robe, an orange hat and had a mole on her cheek. But what caught the trader's greedy eye was a gossamer antique emerald ring which sparkled like a green star upon her finger.

"Hello, lady of the leaves," said the trader in a voice for the first time quiet.

"To whom have I the pleasure of speaking?"

The woman smiled softly. "Some have called me Often. Some have called me Seldom. Some have even called me Never. You may call me... which... even you please. May I help you in any way?"

The trader had never seen anything so beautiful — or valuable — as the brilliant gem in her ring. His eyes grow as still as a snake's. "I'm just a poor trader. Your Worshipship, traveling here and there, trying to make out as best you can. You don't need a... book of plays, perhaps?"

The woman giggled at the trader in a way that made him begin to grow nervously.

"Maybe you'd like a nice fur hat? It's always a winter choosing time, And I have some cute little puggies, With the fur still on them. Yet the woman just smiled and said nothing.

"I see you're alone way out here without a carriage. Perhaps you need a horse? I've a fine fast Arab that I'll trade."

"What would you want in return?" asked the woman softly, holding the emerald up to a tiny shaft of light that fell through the leaves above.

"Well, seeing as you don't appear to have anything else, I guess I'd have to settle for that old... chip of rock on your finger there. I mean I'd never wear such a thing, but some it's about all you have."

"You do like my emerald ring. Why, how nice," said the woman, "that really, I think it's worth more than that old crow horse, don't you?"

"I'll give you ten of my puggies, as well, then, and the basket for nothing."

"The woman looked fixedly at her ring. "Oh, I don't know. I've had it so long. I've grown kind of attached to it, you see."

"You can have these fine flacks of birds, then, And the hat. And the book of plays as well."

The trader's eyes had become rigidly fixed on the shining ring. "It was my mother's ring before that, you understand."

"Take the turbine, too, then, and the bulletin board. And the gun."

"But what would I ever want with an ugly gun? Why, I've lost it's already been fired."

Charles Weld
Whitney Point, N.Y.
moved recently from Frankfurt where he contemplated the mountain

Mount Waldo (10)
(from the series)

This music has measures that are miles wide.

A rest may last a century.

A mountain is a note.

Its black circle comes from nowhere to break the white and endless paper that is space with an outline that does not quiver.

Something this certain defies narrative completely.

When other contours appearing,

The connection is tenuous thus difficult to bear.

Young mountains fly their peaks like pennants, white triangles snipping the blue air with shot.

The old exist next to nothing without remark.

They have long ago lost their native language.

Their history is ice, gone so far north that now it is visible only from great height.

Within this silence each object preserves coherence, a form that burns words away like string.

Bernard Huebner
Skowhegan

The trader suddenly stood up and began pleading. "Well, what do you want, then, pray tell? I've offered you everything except the cart and the cow."

The woman smiled. "Those, too. The cart would be nice, if only to carry everything else in,"

The trader appeared ready to explode and collapse at the same time. He looked at all he had offered, and that he had swindled from others. Then he gazed at the ring once more. It seemed larger than ever. It shone like a miniature sun. Abruptly, he jumped down from the cart. "There, take it! Take it all! It's yours! It's worth it! Now give me my beautiful emerald ring.""Why, certainly," answered the old woman, almost whispering. And she reached inside her robe and drew out a small wooden box. From the box she took a tiny rusty circle of iron and held it out to the trader. "What is this?" He cried, shaking. "That's not an emerald ring!"

"Why, whatever do you mean? How can you say such a thing? Why, you'll see it is just like the other one. In fact, I've a whole bunch just alike. Here, look inside." And slowly she turned the box around so the trader could see a dozen rusty iron rings inside.

"See, my quick-witted fellow: 'em are old rings!"

(The last two pages — open-book style — are simply an illustration: the long road back past all those who were swindled, with the old woman just finishing returning to each that which he or she lost. Back in the woods, the trader sits daunted and empty-handed, with the course on a limb overhead.)

Mount Waldo (10) (from the series)

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KAISA KILPONEN / Rebecca Cummings
(Available, 1983) Winner of the 1984 Fiction Chapbook Competition sponsored by the Maine State Commission on the Arts and the Humanities

As D. H. Lawrence and William Carlos Williams have informed us, there is a "spirit of place." Behind most literature there is a landscape, partly idealized, perhaps, upon which the human figure acts out a part of its life. That place may be an outer place or a place that is within the person herself. And often an interior place, formed out of dream and fantasy and intense imagination, finds its counterpart in a physical landscape. Many of our best American women writers have written out of this perspective, notably Elizabeth Bishop, Willa Cather, and Sarah Orne Jewett.

Like Cather and Jewett before her, Rebecca Cummings' two short stories in Kaisa Kilponen enhance the place and the conditions by which we live and define ourselves. Cummings also asks some large questions in her work. Both "The Legacy" and "Berrying" consider the issue of how long it might take a people living in America, and recently immigrated in the early twentieth century, to be at home in their new landscape. Cummings wonders how close you need to get to the mainstream culture, how long you must live in one place, how much daring and risk it takes in order to maintain your individuality and to assume new roots in the adopted culture.

In "The Legacy," Kaisa Kilponen and her husband Matti surrender their Finnish citizenship but retain their "good name." Kaisa, the day Matti becomes an American citizen, largely due to his wife's disapproval, Matti rejects the suggestion to change his name to Matt Kilton, a name that would assure Matti's easy assimilation into the culture of this magnificent free country. Like Cather's Antonia Shimerda in My Antonia, Kaisa is a defiant, energetic, hard working woman, nostalgic for her homeland. We are meeting a woman in the first painful stages of exile and immigration, at the turning point of acceptance and accommodation.

It is worth recalling here that few women ever welcomed the uprooting of home and family to make the move westward. That was generally the choice of men, and the women followed, doing their best for the sake of affection, but too often in heartiness and weakness. The tension in these stories, therefore, is not so much in Cummings' thin and often predictable plot but in the change of attitude experienced by the central character, Kaisa.

The location of these stories, which I suspect to be Maine with its blueberry fields, references to Yankees, alder copses, elm-lined streets, and the granite quarries at the coast, invades the spirit of the characters and the action. Basically conservative in the way that Sarah Orne Jewett's characters of Dunnet Landing in The Country of the Painted Fire are quick to gossip and find fault with their neighbors, this tendency in Cummings' work allows Kaisa to discover herself by bumping up against the anxieties of a new landscape and a new culture. Her conservatism does not let her see the advantages of citizenship except as a denial of her past and does not let her consider the strengths in Lena's character because she had already disposed of her by the time she arrives in America. Kaisa's vision of herself, Cummings relies on a series of loosely connected sketches to achieve a structure independent of a tightly developed plot, or so it seems from the two chapters of the longer work included in the chapbook. As an American realist, Cummings impels us to look at the structure in terms of place, of identity, and of a search for something.

Placing the main character in her own backyard and forcing her to come to terms with herself, Cummings contrives an accident which finally brings Kaisa to her "senses." Slowly through her recuperation from an encounter with a bull in her neighbor's pasture, Kaisa's vision of herself, Matti, Lena, and the interior landscape of her house widens and moves beyond convention. In the process of recuperation, she discovers new values both in the possibilities of her new country and in the lives of women.

Kaisa later reads aloud the story she has written, which has been written by Rebecca Cummings in her own words.

The Wedding
(Not from the prizewinning chapbook, Kaisa Kilponen)

1916

After Korra Nestori came for Lena Hakola, the house was strangely quiet.

Kaisa Kilponen recovered from her misadventure with the bull more quickly than one would have expected and was soon up and about, but the days were long as she settled herself into her old routine. Even the brightness of autumn went with Lena, and already in early November, the earth was frozen and hollow-sounding underfoot.

Kaisa, clenching the thick collar of her heavy black coat, stumbled a step or two ahead of her husband. The fire in the church that Sunday morning had been started late, and its warmth never reached beyond the front paws. Kaisa was chilled through and through. Now she couldn't walk fast enough. All she could think about was getting home and building up the fires in her own kitchen and sitting room. Gravel crunched under her hard shoes. The sun was thin in a cold November sky.

A spindly red geranium on the front windowsill of the kitchen quivered.

"Ooo--" Kaisa sighed as the heat from the cook stove at last penetrated the back of her plain dark skirt. "It's already winter. And only November." At last the scent of strong coffee bubbling warmed her enough so that she could once again think about the good news.

Erkki and Mari Seilonen's oldest daughter Este was to be married to Lauri Martinen, just six weeks from this very Sunday. And Lauri, being at least ten years older than Este and a steady, hard worker, had already put enough aside to buy a farm where he and his bride would set up housekeeping. What especially excited Kaisa was that this farm was on the very road on which she and Matti lived, just beyond George Pottle's. For years the house had been empty.

But now it would be the home of neighbors. Finnish neighbors.

"Imagine!" Kaisa said to her husband as she clutched the back of her skirt in front of the open oven door. "Este and Lauri. It will be like having relatives close by." And after a long moment's thought, she added, "And don't you suppose that next year there might not be a little one? And when he's big enough, he'll come here to visit. I'll pour coffee for him. Just a little. With plenty of milk. And give him nuts. Or a cracker. Do you remember how two tiny cups of coffee gave me? I'll use those. And he'll think those cups are just for him. What do you suppose they'll name him?" Kaisa hustled to the pantry for two white mugs.

"Erkki probably. Just like his grandfather."

"Woman! Lauri and Este aren't even married, and already you've named their first son?" Matti shouted, feigning annoyance so that the dog named Karlu, who droved up the corner, raised his head to look.

"Let's have a little something to eat and go to the Seilonens' this afternoon," Kaisa suggested. "We haven't been to visit for a long while. And then we can find out more about this wedding."

"It's not so cold."

"On such a cold day?"

"You complained all the way to church."

"That was earlier. It's much warmer now."

As reluctant as Matti was on that cold Sunday afternoon to leave the comfort of the house as well as the long nap he had been looking forward to, he was applauded by his wife's wheedling and harried one of the big brown horses to the express for the ride to the Seilonens'. The husband and wife sat beside each other on the high seat, a heavy buffalo robe wrapped over them.

The prospect of a wedding excited a romantic feeling in Kaisa (that she even as a young bride, had never indulged in. Times had been grim when she had arrived in America, uprooted from her homeland and thrust nearly penniless into a strange culture and even stranger language. Marriage had been a matter of necessity. For her, it had been one more aspect of the hard work of life.

But for Este, who had come to this country in her mother's arms, it was different. She had grown up in Edom. With her brothers, she had gone to one of the little schools that dotted the countryside. And Este could speak English, although she seldom did.

The other Seilonens' offspring were visiting neighbors that afternoon, but Este was at home with her mother and father. It was she who made and served the coffee.

"What a good worker!" Kaisa exclaimed as Este came around the table to pour more coffee, first for the men and then for the women. Kaisa reached out and...
embraced Este around the hips, squeezing the tails of the voluminous white apron. "And so nicely rounded, too."

"And strong," Erkki said, pride glowing in his blue eyes. "She can pitch a load of hay as well as any man."

"Este's always been a big help," said Mari.

"Lauri is smart to take a Finnish wife. These American women don't know how to work. Not like a Finn," Matti remarked, his head bobbing.

Este called Kaisa "aunt" as all the oldest. Mari interrupted. "I plan to help her make a new skirt. We already have some blue navy blue serge. And she has a piece of lace that her godmother gave her on the day she was born. To decorate the shirtwaist."

"Oh!" said Kaisa, sitting tall on the edge of the sofa. "Oh! But this is America. In America women wear white gowns when they marry. Don't you think that would be nice for Este? Now, Mari — I should not have to tell you this — Este is your oldest. You and Erkki have done well here. Better than most. Este should have a white wedding gown. Surely, you and I could make one. And you even have that nice new singer!" Kaisa wagged her bushy finger at Mari. "Este, run and get the Sears-Roebuck catalog so we can see what they have for material."

"But, Kaisa silly—" Este called Kaisa "aunt" as all the children did. "I—" "I'll hear no words of protest!" Kaisa insisted, her eyes closed. "It's the least that I can do. Now get the catalog."

In the warming glow of late afternoon, the horse paddled along the hard gravel road. Kaisa smiled, snuggling into the heavy buffalo robe wrapped over them. After some time, Matti said, "Don't you think you're interfering a little too much?"

"Interfering? I'm not interfering!" Kaisa said in surprise. "I'm helping."

It was the muffled quiet the morning after Lauri and Este's wedding that woke Kaisa. Snow was falling, and already the earth was blanketed in white. "What a good thing the wedding was yesterday and not today," Kaisa said.
Four Generations in the New World

In a far field
my father stands
moving toward the wall.
Stones, grey white and silver
as his wintered ocelot hair,
piled neatly in a wall
press into the farmland.

My letters to him now,
are the unopened wooden gates
closed for the season,
his heart half dead
set up at fifty two.

In this field
I work with my oldest son.
We walk on the green
frozen winter rye November ground.
We stop and pick up handfuls
of stones, spilling them into
daduca's roasting trailer,
their clicking coldness
charging at us
before they will fall
onto the growing stone wall.

Thomas Jamroz
Lincolnville

In this field
I work with my oldest son.
We walk on the green
frozen winter rye November ground.
We stop and pick up handfuls
of stones, spilling them into
daduca's roasting trailer,
their clicking coldness
charging at us
before they will fall
onto the growing stone wall.

Four Generations
in the New World

Many trees shade
this old house
but tallest is the elm.
A hard wood
bearing flowers,
it roots deeply,
supports free-flowing branches.
Best split when frozen,
burning hot when dry,
a thing of extremes,
the elm is dying
in America.

JoAnne Zywna Keer
Weld
Napily writes and tends the dump

The Elm

staring out the kitchen window, glazed with crystals of frost as delicate as the lace that had graced Kate's white wedding dress. “Not many would have wanted to venture out on a day like this.”

“Not many,” Matti worked a patch onto the toe of a rubber boot.

“God was with them.” Kaisa was recalling the feel of Mari Selkonen’s hand in hers as they sat together on the women’s side of the church. And as clearly as though it were occurring again in front of her, she saw Lauri and Este before the altar rail, just as they had stood the day before. “Do you think they’re warm enough?” she suddenly asked.

“Who?”

“Este and Lauri! Do you think they’re warm enough in that house?”

“They have plenty of firewood.”

“Easte and Lauri! Were they warm enough? Was Este lovely? Did they have enough food?”

“Enough food!” Matti scoffed. “You were the one who put all the leftover food into Lauri’s wagon. They have enough food for the whole winter, even if it doesn’t melt until June.” He went back to reading his week-old edition of The County Observer, rattling the pages and ignoring his wife, who cleared a small spot on the frosty window with the tip of her finger to peer anxiously at the deepening snow.

Kaisa switched the flat bread pans from top to bottom and from bottom to top. Pushing the oven door closed, she said, “Este is used to having a big family about. That house must seem quiet to her now. Maybe she misses her mother.”

Matti peered over the top of the newspaper. “You’re not thinking of going there, are you?”

“Maybe they need something. Or they might want company.”

“Company? They don’t want company! Don’t you remember, Kaisa, the day after we were married?”

At noon they had potato soup and bread. Matti repaired harness in the shed, and when his fingers grew numb with cold, he brought his work into the kitchen. Finally, that chore was through, and he stretched on the tufted bed in the sitting room, close to the crackling stove for an afternoon nap.

When he was comfortably sleeping, Kaisa wrapped two of the cooled loaves of crusty bread in a clean towel and tucked them snugly into a knapsack made of woven burlap. She shrugged the knapsack over the bulky material of her black coat, tied a woolen kerchief over her head and picked a pair of warm coarse mittens from the box behind the kitchen stove. She moved so stealthily through the kitchen that the only sound was the click of the outside door as she closed it. In the shed she found the narrow pointed skis that Matti had made many winters before and carried them out into the softly falling snow.
Inside Knight's Old Country Store, the shadows from the shelves made a checked pattern of light on the oak floor. The wood stove, between the counter and George's chair, threw a long black shadow that stretched under the penny candy counter and broke the checked pattern into distinct halves. Past the rocking chair were the beer coolers, and past the beer coolers were the wine shelves to the right; to the left a Budweiser sign hung in a small window. When the sun poured in through the near sign, flecks of red light would reflect between the burgundy and roses, and if I was back stock in the shelves the dust on the bottles would show like grey moss.

When I opened the store in the morning, George would be sitting on the front steps. He reserved two newspapers each day — the Portland Press Herald and The Boston Globe — and he read them over to cover in his rocking chair by the front window. The slanted shadows seemed to make him blend with the floor as he read and as he rocked back and forth the lines would move about him. He wore a brimmed cap, slightly cocked, and one lens on his black horn-rimmed glasses was much thicker than the other. Sometimes while reading he would remove his glasses to use the thick lens as a magnifying glass. The shadow from his cap divided his face into distinct zones with no gradient, and if I stood close to him, the white fuzz covering his neck glistened slightly.

George stopped a little as he walked and scuffed his feet on the floor when he moved from the counter to his chair while clenching his papers. Then he would move his lips while he read and habitually lick them as he turned the pages; his tongue had weathered his lips brown. Almost every night he bought bananas, a can of condensed milk, a can of Campbell's Chicken Gumbo, and a Snicker bar although occasionally he splurged and bought a box of Fig Newtons. He first spoke with me when I started working the store alone, on Sundays and Mondays, the two days the Knights chose not to work.

"What time you close tonight?"
"Eight o'clock?"
"Right, you say?"
"Yes."
"They say workin' a store's a good job for a young feller. Know why?"
"Why's that?"
"You're meetin' people."
"Is that right?"

"That's what they say."
He looked back to his paper, the chair moving back and forth as he read. I dusted the wine bottles and then came back behind the counter.
"So how you like tendin' stores?"
"It's all right."
"Knights is good people, ain't they?"
"They seem pleasant enough."
"said you was a college feller from Michigan."
"I never finished."
"What's that, you say?"
"I used to spend summers not too far from here. Thought I'd be happier in the country with a pile of wood to split. So I quit."
"Michigan don't have country stawalls like Knight's do they?"
"Not as old as this one."
"'Twas here 'fore the Revolution, you know."
"I saw the date stamped in the foundation."
Later a hard rain knocked down most of the fall color from the trees. In the morning I thought about the evening papers I'd have to prepare as I walked down the hill into the village. In the top right hand corner I'd print the name of each person who reserved one. Most of the faces were familiar, but having never been very good with names, people would often come to the counter with a quart of milk and say, "And my paper?" I would have to ask: "What's the name?"

They'd grown impatient so I tried to fit the right name with each face. George was waiting on the steps.
"Good morning, George."
"'Bout a rain last night, weren't it."
"'Cats and dogs."
We went inside. I unwrapped two bundles of papers and printed "George" in the upper right hand corner of a Globe and a Press while he stood over the counter licking his lips.
"How much is that?"
"Forty-five cents."
"Fifty-five, you say?"
"Yes."
"That's a lot to pay for a paper, isn't it."

Photo by Elliott Nealy
"I guess so, George."

"How much you s'pose I get for social security?"

"I don't know."

"Three hundred and nine dollars. Man can live pretty good on that."

"I guess he can."

Outside, a small crevice of sunlight seeped through the cloud cover spreading faint shadows across George's flannel shirt as he scuffled over to his chair. I finished the papers and began stocking the milk cooler while he read. Then I wiped the fingerprints from the antique glass case filled with penny candy in various cut glass dishes.

"How long have you lived in Center Sweyzer, George?"

"Since 1918. Fifty-two years."

"Sixty-two."

"I vote for the President."

"Frank. Quite a rain last night, weren't it?"

"Yep."

"Three hundred and nine dollars. Man can live pretty good on that."
around his neck. I forgot and said goodnight; he raised his arm above his shoulder as he left to go in.

In mid-January, after a Nor'easter had dumped over two feet of snow, I walked down to open the store and was a little surprised that George wasn't waiting on the steps. Inside, it was pale grey so I turned on all the lights in the coolers before I prepared the papers and noticed George hadn't picked his up in two days.

When someone repeated a paper did not show, it was still saved, and I would clip the day old paper and the new one with a wooden clothstrip. People generally needed about having to buy a day old paper, but it was store policy, and if they didn't like it, they could stop returning and just take their chances that the paper wouldn't all be sold. The papers rarely were gone. When I finished STACKING the wine bottles Joe King pulled in and I put his paper and Murriel Cornell on the counter.

"Morning."

"Jawge ain't in today."

"Hasn't picked up his papers in a couple of days. Maybe he went somewhere."

"Jawge? He got no place to go. He's a funny feller. Never had no one Sleeps in a cold room."

"Is that right?"

"Yeah. When I shut up to the wall, Jawge was there. Asked me to place to quiet up his store. Paper Pilot out. Turn he goes to bed, shuts it right down."

"Really?"

"He's right as a clam. Jawge is. Don't know what folks. Can't take it to the grave. One day Charlie MacRook in Jawge shut up. Know Charlie?"

"Mays not come in much."

"Charlie was tight in George's chair one day and Jawge tells him to git. Says Charlie, 'We're so tight,' and gives Jawge a shove. 'Least I can pay my bills, says Jawge. 'Well, Jawge, he's a funny feller.'"

He paid with the exact change and left. I went back to the meat counter to slice Mr. Bishop's bacon. He came at quarter ten, headed at George's chair then at me and said: 'Put it on my tab.'

The rest of the day dragged because few people bothered to come in out the lousy weather. I read both the Press and the Globe from cover to cover. At three-thirty read 'the Help Wanted' in the Globe, there were two jobs. At four I read 'Automobiles For Sale or Trade' in the Press. Around four thirty I threw them away so I wouldn't reneer old news.

I began closing at right knowing that if I didn't check on George I'd lay awake wondering how long an old man like him might lay dead before someone would come by. And besides, if I were George, I'd want me to come take a look. After all the lights were off except the lamp over the register I stood under the pool of light counting the change out to the nearest dollar. Then I put it into four paper cups labeled Pennies, Nickels, Dimes, and Quarters. I added to the change what ever bills it took to make an even sixty and placed them in with the pennies. The rest went in a green cloth bag that had a picture of Casco Bank on both sides. I span the lock on the safe and sized the wood stove before I left.

Although I'd never been to his house, he told me some time ago that it was across from the old church that had been closed up — a short walk from the old country store. When I reached the church, I looked back down the street. I'd passed three houses: two on the left and one on the right. The two on the left had lights on, and the square window frames were yellow. There were four yellow squares of light in the first house and one upstairs in the second.

If George had answered his door when I knocked, I'd have been surprised, but I knocked much harder the second time because he was a little hard of hearing. The cold weather had drawn the door so that I had to strike the upper right hand corner of it to enter, and then I hesitated for a moment before going inside. I stood in the kitchen and the steam from breath was thick. George had been rocking in the doorway of his kitchen. Next to him was a wood stove that I touched and my fingers stuck slightly. I knew he liked to rock by wood heat and I walked by him into the next room, unfinished except for a couch and a propane furnace, the blue pilot light still burning. I listened to the pilot hiss. He'd died with his cap and glasses on. A Bean blanket was wrapped around his feet. Next to the blanket were two neatly folded papers and his scarf. I laid a blanket over him that covered a tattered cushion on the couch, and left.

Outside, I wondered why I'd covered George with a blanket as I walked back to the store. The first house on the left had one yellow square of light on upstairs and the second house was dark. When I opened the store, the snow from house headed like rain on glass on the oak floor, and one of the beds rolled into a crack between the boards. Then I went to the cooler, opened a beer, and called the sheriff. Center Sweeney didn't have one so I called Freeburg.

"Is this the sheriff?"

"Ay-ah."

"Do you know a man named George...? I don't know his last name."

"There's lots of old men."

"He's lived in Center Sweeney most all his life."

"Jawge Hale?"

"Maybe. He sits in Knight's Country Store a lot."

"That's Jawge Hale."

"He's dead."

"Dead?"

"I didn't know who to call. I just went to check on him because he hadn't picked up his papers in a couple of days."

"Got to have your name."

"Shamus. Paul Shamus."

I could hear him shuffling some paper. "Capital SHA-MUS."

"Yes."

"I'll call Russ up to the hospital."

"You want me to write here in the store?"

"What fo'gal? I'll get Russ over to pick him up."

I was watching the froth run down the neck of the bottle and there was a bubble on the mouth's edge that looked like it should burst but stubbornly clung to the lip. Then I walked over to the cooler, grabbed another beer, and sat in George's chair. Perhaps I was afraid I'd walk in or maybe I just never cared to sit in before. As I sipped my beer I looked out on the sleeping street, moving back and forth by the store while the coolers hummed and hummed.

Two weeks after George was buried I walked down to open the store, hoping the ground fog would see its shadow. Frost was on the hardcore for the third day running, and I wondered if superstition would prove true and we would receive a winter run. After I'd prepared the papers and stacked the milk cooler, I made a cup of coffee and picked up a Globe. The Celts beat the Pistons, the Wings lost as usual, Zonkert was featured in 'Douncebury,' and an ad was selling air fare from Boston to London for ninety-nine dollars. Joe King pulled in and I laid his paper and Murriel Cornell on the counter.

"Morning."

"Hog fanny see his shadow?"

"Ninety-nine dollars."

"What's that, you say?"

"Oh. I guess I was talking to myself."

"Frost been three days running."

"I guess it has."

"Charlie MacRook says we got to have six weeks more winter."

He paid for his papers and cigars with the exact change and sat in George's chair. Perhaps I was afraid I'd walk in or maybe I just never cared to sit in before. As I sipped my beer I looked out on the sleeping street, moving back and forth by the store while the coolers hummed and hummed.

Doug Corey
So. Penobscot
reaches part-time at WMO
Blue Notes
from Growing Pains, a novel

Ted struggled not to meet Joy's eyes as he lectured on Monday morning. As the class was leaving he said, "Joy, I'd like to see you a minute." He had her wait at the desk until everyone else was gone and then he said softly, "Well?"

"Well what?" she said. Her face was impassive, her eyes cool gray—yet with something hurt and imploring in them.

"Where do you think?"

"Is that all you care about?"

"Of course it's not all I care about, but Jesus Christ!"

She shook her head. "I'm six days overdue now, Bear.

"His heart took a sickenling plunge. She asked: "Can you meet me tonight?"

"No reply. The room—gray shaggy rug, harsh ticking air-conditioner, headboard of plastic walnut attached to the wall—revolved to the cellular reeler tune in his brain. Her lips and chin were speckled with threads of gold.

"It's your wife, I can tell. You have to leave her, Bear."

"Tell me again that you'll never leave me."

"He stroked her hair—as if she were an animal, a pet. "I will."

"He felt her tremble, saw tears in her eyes. "I've only been close to one other person in my life," she said. "Just one, and I need you so much."

"He took a sad, deep breath. "Joy, look...you're only seventeen."

"Which was, after all, the impossible truth.

"Her quivering lips. "Who cares? What difference does that make? Is that the problem?" Her eyes were smaroy now, and pleading, "All I know is I love you, you just can't leave me alone. It can't happen twice, not so soon."

"He looked away at the holes in the drapes and the Vacancy sign. He stood up and went to the window, pushed the fabric around so the slit was hidden, and returned. Sat down on the bad again. "Rod?"

"He said. "Was he the other person?"

"She sucked mucous into her throat, a snore. "That creep! Are you kidding?"

"Well who—"

""It's not important, you don't want to know."

"She was probably right. Some postural crud even worse than Rod who made teaching tortoise, no doubt. Let it ride.

"Her tongue on the gap in her teeth; her troubled eyes. "You're the only person I really feel with," she said. "Without you I'm all alone. I can't stand to be alone! My father...Christ! I have his tee inside me. I can't burn it out!" Moisture rushed to her eyes, spilled over. She said, "My brother's dead. He was only two years older than I am now."

"He replied, headboard of plastic walnut attached to the wall—revolved to the cellular reeler tune in his brain. Her lips and chin were speckled with threads of gold.

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"She was starting that horrible shaking. He held her. She said, "We're living in the earth's last days! The dark is coming down! It's too late to go back."

"He squeezed her into his arms, we're going to blow ourselves to bits by accident no matter what we do, it's too late!"

"A heavy tremor shook her. He said, "Joy, no. It's okay. You're all right, we're all right, no one's going to die."

"Her face was twisted painfully and her eyes were closed. "No, nobody beats death, you said it yourself." Staring at him again, her eyes suddenly wide, she said, "The whole world's going to die!" Then she wrestled herself out of his arms and ran to the bathroom.

"Retching: violent and loud.

"He found her on her knees in the bare bright light. She clung to the toilet, her face in the bowl, the bowl full of yellowish gruel. She bent again; more liquid erupted and pooled; streams hung from her lips.

"He held her shoulder, felt her shiis, heard the click of her silvering teeth. She spanned again with a horriing sound.

"And eyes on the toilet, sad, haunted eyes. He thought: Now isn't this a pretty piece of porn? There was no doubt a section hed over-viewed on those decadent bookstore rakes shesent him to that catered to just this thing: VOMITING VIXENS, BARFING BEAUTIES, UPCHUCKING CHICKS. He held her as she jerked and groaned again.

"The dazzle of light on porcelain tank and fiberglass tub; the shower curtain, torn at the top, a haze of fungus at its base; the thin cold switch of her flesh.

"Then all at once with a pitiful cry she said: "Tell me you love me! Promise you'll never leave me!"

"He stared at her. He shook his head. "Joy..."

"Promise! Promise me now! White fire was in her eyes.

"He wet his hot numb lips. "I...promise."

"She reached again, but nothing came up; leaned back; her gasping breath. She said, "Oh Christ," and ripped a wad of toilet paper off the roll. Wiped her mouth. Hung, head over soiled bowl, eyes closed, and time stood still, eternity trapped in the fixtured glare. It was just the two of them, alone in all the universe.

"Slowly she got her feet and tripped the lever. The contents of her guts disappeared with a gurgle and swish. She washed her face and rinsed her mouth, the toilet sighed, he helped her to the bed.

"His thoughts were scattered sparks. "Do you want anything? Can I get you some Coke?" He was thinking of him, his twelve-year-old, and that virus she'd had before Christmas: thirteen hours of throw-up and then Coke, good Coke, bad at last done the trick.

"Okay," she said. "Yeah, Coke."

"He watched her drink. Her hand was shaking as she raised the cup.

"You want me to pour some more?"

"No, that's enough." Her funny eyes. She set the cup on the brown formlsa night stand, smiling wanly. "Come here."

"He sat beside her.

"Put your arms around me, told her."

"He did it; felt her tremor diminish, sporadic. He said, "Joy, maybe that doctor could help you.—That therapist you said you saw last year."

"A scornful sniff. "That guy? Forget it." She stared with atorid, blurry eyes. "No, all I need is you."

"A silence. She continued to stare. She said: "Say you love me."

"I love you."

"Tell me again that you'll never leave me."

"I'll...never leave you."

"Oh Bear, my wonderful Bear." She leaned her head against his chest.

"I'm burning it, melted him down. He held her for long and mournful minutes and didn't know what to do. Oh this was a blue, blue note all right. He breathed her sad soft hair.

"Her shaking stopped. She kissed his ear and smiled and said, "I'm
Deer-Crossing Signs

Only bucks jump.
The rack of four horns, the stretched body leaping diagonally from right to left as if into and out of the sign itself. Left is always into the road.

No one has ever seen a deer cross in these places. The signs are a conspiracy of New England's governors to encourage tourism. It is history. Rockefeller and Curtis and the others got together and agreed about deer and how they need to be protected, how landscape is dull and deer would be good. They agreed the prisoners in prison who make roadsides needed work and the illusion of freedom.

Tourists wait for weeks, you can see them. All summer long they come. They set up actual camps by the signs, cook on the roadside, and pee in the ditches. During daytime they sleep wakefully in their Winnebagos, and at night they grow tense and wait with huge halogen spotlights on thin extension cords plugged into their cigarette lighters. Sometimes they shine their lights on each other, splashing their beams back and forth on each other's bodies, across their genitals, and into their faces, looking for two eyes that glow wildly in the night.

But no one from New Jersey has glowing eyes. Their tails do not twitch. They grow bolder. Where are the deer?

They yearn for deer, for a flash of ankle, a chocolate flickering shape.

They compare slogans on their license plates which they've escaped in the growth season. They wish theirs said something romantic, like Vacationland, or stirring, like Live Free or Die.

The natives whiz by, not looking, in old cars made of Bond-o and tape, with Vacatiolland on their license plates. They know where the deer are.

They instruct their young: to be seen, to be immortal before November, to become exactly like the sign, to leap out diagonally from right to left in the exact angle onto the road, hooves sparking, and then another leap up, up over the guardrail, and gone. He will not do it. He yearns, but no.

No deer has ever done it.

The deer are all gathered silently in the woods, fifty yards from these signs. Hundreds of deer are behind each sign. They discover their young. "Never, ever, cross here. They have signs warning us, the governor is good to us." The deer know everything.

They know the difference between Winnebagos and Chippewas, they can read license plates and know all the slogans.

They watch men from Florida, the Sunshine State, try to find them with binoculars that see in the dark. They hear men from Wisconsin, America's Dairyland, speak of milking horned animals that are three times the size of deer and sluggish as mud.

They see men in mustaches from Washington, D.C., Our Nation's Capitol, park their Renegades side by side and speak to each other over CB radios about their fantasies of wilderness, their yearning for deer.

One young buck, his rack itching with fresh velvet, also yearns: to be seen, to be immortal before November, a flash of brown, a blur, a white tail twitching, to become exactly like the sign, to leap out diagonally from right to left in the exact angle onto the road, hooves sparking, and then another leap up, up over the guardrail, and gone. He will not do it. He yearns, but no. No deer has ever done it.

Terry Plankett
Hallowell
Inches of China

Ice Out:
International Bridge
Fort Kent, Maine

The winter brings gray cranial wind, the choral sighs of guilty men, condemned, impatient for the noise, as boredom's frigid veer seizes thoughts, makes them seep, long as frozen rivers through transcontinental sewer pipes: drip-drip, drip-drip. Then madness, trench and divine. The floes of ice street like dreaming dogs and lift on river-swell, snap frenzy-free to rage, rage I sell you, rushing the blume like albatross bids they charge abutments, stampede past, exhale the forest. Go now; go stand like a giant once again, immerse yourself and swallow deep, swallow everything.

Christopher Falby
Thomaston

Curtis Derrick
Fort Kent
rated in the New Smith & all
inland administrator
Awake and Trying
to Get a Whole Dream Back

It's like trying to chase
a windblown piece of paper down
at the right time in front of you
you stoop and grab
it slides and curls
you run and stomp
it flips and soots

with chance and time both running out
you edge up close
you corner it
it billows up
faces out of sight.

Richard Aldridge
Sebasco Estates

reaches at More H.S. in Bath

The Feast

A wax pilgrim woman stood on the table
and took the place of my name
when we sat down to turkey dinner.
I was only eight and I stole a match
from my grandfather's snuff box
and waited to set that lady's hair
on fire. It was easy to melt her head
without he'd grab me round the ankle and give me a mighty cuff.

Motivated, I must have watched her burn
into that stiff white collar.
Motionless, I must have watched her burn
onto the bone by the flames.

I wanted to understand suffering,
more than the harmless passing
of a finger through a flame,
but her grief was indecipherable
and I had no language for pain.

Now, far from the old horror
of childhood, I want to remember a feast
but think only of that austere lady
dressed in black, her hair in flames.

Kathleen Lignell
Stockton Springs
works at See Grant, UMO

Memorial

Well, Emma. We buried two of them today. Gorry, but I'm all
hymned out. Bert took up the better part of the morning, and we
didn't get poor Snowball under the daylilies til just before the rain
come back.

Odd about them two dyin' just three days apart like that. But leave
it to that old cat to be so stubborn as to hold on and let old Bert go
first. I expect no one but me knew how sick they was. We'll put
Bert's ashes around that big azalea bush out back o' the garden.

I got a good look at Doc's face today as he come back up the aisle
after readin' the Twenty-third Psalm. I came that close to cryin' right
then. Doc will sure miss Bert at the poker game down to the fish-
house. He liked to take Bert's money home. Said Bert never come by
it honest anyway, so he shouldn't miss it none.

You know that brass Roll Call they got up on the north wall there,
the one from the War. I always mean to take a closer look at it, see if
I still remember all the names on it. it seems like every time I
think to look, I'm settin' there for a weddin' or a funeral, and I don't
get to it.

Well, we'll miss them two all right.

Didn't they both love birds, though? Bert got his exercise shakin'
his cane after that cat at the birdfeeder. What a sight!

And the cat. He'd
settin' there in church listenin' to the service, and I looked
down and picked a white hair off my sweater. You know, I had to
smile, Emma. He was a shedder, that one.

Sandra Dickson
Port Clyde

Kennebec A Portfolio of Maine Writing

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