

DENALI

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by Arthur J. Diamond

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The Photographer's Office

The night my mother told me we were going to South America must have been a Monday, because I remember the smell of the leftover beef burning while she waited for me to finish prattling on about the fingerpaintings I'd made in kindergarten. She still served roast beef every Sunday, though my father had gone away months before, in the spring. My mother told me of our journey as we dined on peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and early the next morning we left our tainted apartment and walked to my school.

My teacher was an efficient woman who used her friendly voice like a crowbar, whether lecturing the class on correct ways to request to go to the bathroom or suggesting to the janitor that the heat in the room be turned up. But I remember her voice faltering before my mother as they talked behind me near the flag. I sat at a window, unmourned by my classmates playing in the yard. The teacher's faltering was followed by silence, and then the sound of high heels hurrying away down the hallway. I turned and observed my mother's anxious face, pale by weariness and the blaze of her red pantsuit, as she thumbed through the fingerpaintings I'd done the day before. I knew her look and felt bad for her but also for myself for being moved again, and when she looked up I looked away. The next morning we drove into Manhattan to have our passport photos taken.

We parked in a garage on the Lower East Side across from a jeweler's and hurried up the street. I thought it strange that she didn't even glance at the autumn fashions in the store windows as she led me by the hand through the sidewalk traffic. She wore an olive sweater that I liked, but I hated her tan shoulder bag of woven hemp because it kept slipping down her arm and onto our clasped hands. At the corner we entered a building and climbed a long dark stairway which smelled foul and ended at an old wooden door with a sticky brass knob. The door was stuck and my mother, impatient, reached over me to strike it with the heel of her hand—I had to duck out of the way of her bag. Huffing and sweating, we stepped inside.

The sudden light hurt my eyes. Fainting like a fighter, I struggled beneath the arc of my elbow to see that the small room was almost packed with people. Some stood, most sat, and all looked old and withered beneath the harsh glow of the fluorescent bulbs. They were all staring at us. I bolted for the large air conditioner on the floor in the corner and claimed it for myself, placing beside it on the tiled floor my coloring book and box of crayons. My mother stood at the door until a plump man with a derby hat across from me got up. She took his chair and I didn't hear her thank him. The man shrugged as he edged past those who were standing; they smiled weakly and moved to make room for him by a stroller with a broken seat.

My mother unbuttoned her sweater. She reached into her shoulder bag and pulled out a red polka dotted handkerchief and dabbed at her eyeliner, then patted her cheeks and forehead free of perspiration. She checked her face with a small mirror. Then she fumbled with the handkerchief on her lap for a moment before suddenly bringing it up to her face and pressing it against her eyes. I hated when she did this. In a park, on the subway, while waiting in line somewhere, she

would hide her eyes behind a handkerchief and leave me alone with the world. I could usually look up and outside ourselves for a time but not too long. Then I would have to close my eyes, too. But in the waiting room I was too indignant about our upcoming journey to feel alone and so while my mother sat with the handkerchief over her eyes I looked easily around me.

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Leo Whitehorse

The Photographer's Office (cont'd.)

There were no windows and everything was grey. The peeling walls were grey, the floor and ceiling were grey, and the people were grey, too. Most were suited old men with dull shoes and wives who wore long drab dresses and heavy faces. There were ten or twelve people in all, each looking more uncomfortable than the next. The men held newspapers on their laps and the women sat over shopping bags, and I knew that the things they read and carried in their bags all day were grey, too. There was a young couple with a crying infant but everybody else was old and all of them, even the young couple, were still and wore their grey patience like armor. But not my mother. She wore her red polka dotted handkerchief across her face like a shield but underneath I could sense she was angry.

She folded her handkerchief and put it away, then began stroking her curly dark hair with her white enameled brush with the flamingo painted on the back. Her eyes were closed and her head tilted forward. Her audience was absorbed in her restlessness. They all stared, some slack-jawed. I looked at them and back at her; she brushed and tilted and looked at no one. The room was quiet. The infant had even stopped crying.

For a moment her brush hung suspended in air.

She reached into her bag and pulling out a small envelope took from it her wedding ring and pushed her finger through it. I hadn't noticed she hadn't been wearing it. Then the office door opened and there stood the photographer.

Except for being a small man he looked very much like my father. He had the same thin black mustache and oily black hair as my father, wore a suit and tie and stood straight and proud in the doorway, almost at attention. He thrust back his head and scowled, like my father would do when entering a roomful of students or strangers, but this man's scowl did not have the jocularity of my father's. He was younger than my father and I remembered he'd once come over for dinner when we lived in the Bronx, but he didn't recognize me now so I looked away from his scowl; when I looked back he had seen my mother and was gesturing her inside. She walked past him, took my hand, and I followed her, feeling first the stress of the others still waiting and then the little photographer on my heels as he stumbled while shutting the door behind us.

The office was cool and dark. I walked past a camera on a tripod and toward the black curtain on the far wall, not knowing where I was to sit or stand. The curtain was flanked at either side by a chair, one of shiny wood and the other upholstered. There was a small air conditioner in the wall in the corner and upon it, in a simple black frame, was a picture of my father and the photographer. Both wore cameras from straps around their tanned necks and held before them at chest-level a couple of newspapers. My father's arm was around the smaller man's shoulders, and the headlines and photos on each of the newspapers were large and dark. I wished I could read the headlines. My father and the photographer wore shirts that were sweat-soaked and their smiles were broad and tired, like those on the faces of field laborers around a fire at the end of a good day.

The photographer commented on the unusually warm weather as he prepared the camera. His Spanish accent was slight, like my mother's. She didn't respond to him. He then asked me to pull a chair over and sit in front of the black curtain. My mother nodded and I did as I was told, slowly at first and then with haste as I noticed the photographer glaring at me. Sitting in the warm cone of light before the camera, I was unable to see clearly outside of it and waited while they talked.

My mother spoke to him, using a sharp, critical tone of voice that she sometimes used with bank tellers and department store clerks, and which impressed me always by the dutiful responses it would get. But

the photographer wasn't impressed. He began yelling. "I am innocent," he yelled, several times, and I could tell he was pacing—I heard the floorboards creaking beneath the tile. The creaking stopped. Then: "Am I at fault because I made it back?" He yelled this, too, and I was worried that the others in the waiting room would hear. I strained to see the photographer but stayed blind under the spotlight.

Something was knocked over. I stood and ducked out of the light. I saw him facing my mother with his jacket off and his shirt pulled up to his neck. There were many dark lines etched into his back that criss-crossed and circled around to his stomach. My mother sat in a chair beside him and sobbed, her hands covering her eyes. When the photographer glanced back and saw I was watching he turned away and tucked in his shirt. My mother looked up and smiling feebly said that everything was all right and that I should sit down again before the camera. The photographer righted an old lacquered coat rack lying at his feet, cursed twice, and dimmed the spotlight.

The camera was large and had a black cloth bunched up in back, and because of its single protruding lens and two chrome dials on either side I thought it looked like the head of a bird. I tried to imagine what kind of bird. First it was a flamingo, like the one on my mother's hairbrush. Then it looked more like a whooping crane, a long-legged member of the family of strange birds in the poster above the blackboard at school. Frightened and tense, I giggled softly to myself. I tried to stop but couldn't and put my hand over my mouth.

When the photographer's short thin legs appeared behind the camera I laughed out loud. His stick legs and pointy black shoes beneath the billed box and the way he hid in the camera's back as if he were a ventriloquist—I thought he would whoop a few times and then leap at me. I laughed loud and hard and longer than I had to but I knew somehow it would make things better and when I finally stopped the tension in the room had turned to embarrassment.

The photographer lifted the curtain off his head and asked me what I was laughing about and why and I told him. They were both motionless as I spoke and when I finished he smiled. "The boy is smart, Justina," he said. "With laughter he dispels our anger." He shook his head sadly and told her he was sorry but she put her head in her hands again and wept. Then she said, through her tears: "It was my fault."

The photographer looked weary. "The trip was your husband's idea," he said, lighting a cigarette he'd pulled from his shirt pocket. "You know that. And after I made the arrangements to leave he wanted more pictures and therefore we cannot blame ourselves for his disappearance. He called me from a hotel on the wrong side of town. 'Just a few more pictures,' he said, and then he'd get a cab and meet me at the airport. And that's the last I heard from him."

"It was my fault," my mother repeated, still sobbing. The photographer threw his cigarette to the floor and crushed it under his shoe.

"You saw the people in my waiting room?" He was pointing to the door. "They all have loved ones who are missing, too. Your husband, at least, had a chance, and you tell me it was your fault." He cursed and went to the air conditioner and stood before it. After studying the picture for a few moments he finally signed and returned to her side. His voice was now tender.

"I'm a photographer—I take pictures. I have no reasons, I can place no blame. But I do have names and addresses and while I'm here you and the others can get them from me. That's all I can give to you, Justina—names and addresses—anytime."

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His voice was barely audible above the crying infant in the other room. My mother did not move but the photographer straightened and seemed to be trying to read her thoughts by studying the top of her head. He looked at her intensely and then glanced over at me. His eyes were weak and hopeful. He looked back down at her.

"He knew about us," she said, without looking up.

I saw the pants pocket of the photographer's left leg bulge as his hand inside became a fist. For a moment his whole body quivered and I thought he was about to begin yelling again. But almost as soon as it appeared the clenched hand flattened and the quivering stopped.

"No. Certainly not. I never told him," the photographer said flatly. "But let me say this, Justina, that even if he did know, it wouldn't . . . it wouldn't have made a difference." His thoughts had taken him far away and he shuddered there, but the recurrent wails from the infant in the next room brought him back.

"Come," he said. "Others are waiting." He suggested that my mother be photographed first, and she rose stiffly and wandered over to where I was sitting. I stood up and out of the way. The photographer went back to his place behind the camera.

She was photographed and then I, and after more silence between them and an apology from me to the photographer for laughing we said our goodbyes. My mother was still very distant. She asked to use the bathroom and while she was in there the photographer searched through a desk drawer and pulled out a small bulky envelope, which he put into my pocket just before my mother came out. He then handed to her the developed photos and a piece of paper with names and addresses on it and she put them in her bag. The door was opened and we stepped back into the waiting room.

Again I shielded my eyes against the bright light. The room smelled of stale clothes and I took breaths through my mouth. I kept my eyes to the floor and heard the photographer call "next" behind us; my mother took me by the hand and led me through the thicket of outstretched legs, walking sticks, and shopping bags. I didn't look up. I didn't want to see the grey faces. I was following a trail of grime and gum wrappers to the door when my mother suddenly turned and stepped past and back toward the photographer.

He took a step back as she strode up to him. She took his hands and knelt before him. Alarmed, he tried to pull away, but she held on tight. Then she kissed his hands once, twice. The photographer's face turned red. She stood, hugged him, and thanked him for his help, and said loudly that she was sorry for her behavior. "Thank you," she repeated. The photographer's eyes were wet and he was fighting back a smile.

The others in the room had been still and staring but now they were animated. Those sitting chuckled with those standing as they nodded to each other and to the photographer and his red face. The plump man in the derby hat reached down to chuck the chin of the baby boy crying on his mother's lap; the infant giggled and the mother and her husband sitting across the aisle beamed at each other. The room was busy with noise and motion and didn't look grey to me now at all.

I waited by the door and watched my mother curtsy and the photographer bow, and as he rose I saw that the smile he'd fought back had won and was doing a victory dance across his lips. My mother left him, excused herself as the people pulled in their legs and canes and bags for her, and took my hand again to lead me through the door and down the long dark stairs to the street below.

It was noontime. We watched masses of hurrying people hurling talk and laughter and anxiety and cigarette butts before and behind them as we stood back out of the way in the shade of the building. I cooled my back on the rough bricks and my mother pulled out her handkerchief, dabbed at her forehead, began folding the handkerchief but then simply stuffed it into her bag. I moved closer to her. She then removed her ring and replaced it in the envelope. As she did this she reminded me that we were next to go to the jeweler's to pawn the ring, but I was looking past her and into the eyes of those passing us on the sidewalk, and I didn't respond to her. I felt her squeeze my hand but I was scared. There were so many people, so many names and faces and eyes. I was afraid of being swallowed up. We could be lost forever in them.

But she didn't seem fearful at all. The way she stood straight and composed with her head high and her eyes dark and resolute as the crowds passed gave me confidence. I squeezed her hand and let it go, and imagined that the crowds of people were something else. I imagined they were groups of friends riding on a huge carousel that tilted and whirled and played pretty music while it took everyone around in circles. My mother and I had our tickets and were waiting for it to slow down so that we could climb aboard. It was all just a happy ride. There was nothing to fear.

I looked up at my mother to see if she was ready to get on with me, and she turned and smiled confidently. But reaching for her hand again I remembered I'd left my coloring book and box of crayons in the waiting room. She told me to get them and meet her in the jeweler's up the street. "You won't get lost?" she said. I grinned and shook my head. As she stepped away from me and into the sidewalk traffic I felt like turning away, but didn't, and watched her disappear.

I hesitated at the entrance to the stairway. It seemed darker and fouler smelling than before. But up the stairs I trudged, alert to the scraping of my shoes on the damp steps as the noise from the street subsided. This raw scraping sound made me feel sad and vulnerable, and I shuddered and didn't know why. I didn't know I was appearing in a photograph of the future.

I would walk up and down these moss-mottled stairs during the next three months with my mother in various prisons and police stations in South America. Our uniformed escorts stepped in the dark ahead of us while behind us light and noise slipped away. Except for the sound of our shoes. This sound always stayed with us, and I got used to it. It accompanied us up and down the hundred or so stairways that never led to my missing father. For three months we searched; for three months we were disappointed. But we never despaired.

Everywhere there were people who tried to help us. These were simple people, quiet people, people who had their own losses and on the surface appeared indifferent and sometimes hostile, but who would respond, when confronted privately with a plea and a picture of my father, with open hearts and homes. I remember jungle villages of ramshackle houses, pretty birds, and children everywhere. I remember the stony men in suits from our government—they all looked the same and followed us around. And I remember the men in uniforms. They were everywhere. The people were afraid of them and my mother was too but her fear didn't keep her from marching through buildings and prisons and outside through the villages to look for those she thought could help us.

There were names and addresses of newspapermen and artists and teachers on the paper my mother got from the photographer, and a few times we met with someone who'd actually known my father, but most of the people she spoke with were common people doing common things. After we returned to New York and I was back in kindergarten I drew people I remembered, and when I'd bring them home to my mother she'd sometimes cry but always encourage me to keep remembering and drawing. I drew people sitting at their fruitstands in a marketplace. I drew old men playing chess on rickety card tables under shop awnings. I drew women with babies sitting on benches at the plaza beneath shade trees. I even drew the men in uniforms. I once drew a picture of the photographer—he had moved away before we got back and we never saw him again—and this picture made my mother happy. But mostly I drew pictures of people I remembered from our journey: common people, people waiting for someone, people waiting for something to happen.

As I reached the top of the stairs I remembered the envelope in my pocket. There was a thin strip of light beneath the old wooden door and into this light I placed the content of the envelope. It was a compass. It was gold-plated with red and green letters inside and a gold needle. The needle, however, had broken off from the center pin and moved freely beneath the glass. My father's initials were engraved in the back.

I put the compass back in my pocket, then took it out again. Twisting the sticky brass doorknob with one hand and clutching the broken compass in the other, I pushed open the door with my elbow and stood tall as the bright light and stale air hit me at once. I then stepped inside the waiting room, my eyes wide open and struggling to see.

Poetic Form

by Phil Turchin

...art works by artifice, by illusion, and by technique, and that no amount of talent, idea, or largeness of soul or heart in the artist produces anything except through artifice or technique, through, that is, a mastery of the conventions appropriate to the art.

Paul Fussell, Jr., *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form*

...technique alone is meaningless, that it achieves value only insofar as it serves to evoke, define and illuminate the human situation.

Michael Millgate, *The Achievement of William Faulkner*

Form in poetry is a set of rules governing how you arrange words into a poem. Traditional English poetic form gives rules of meter, rhyme and number of lines. Some poetic forms use number of syllables per line. Other criteria can be the shape of the poem upon the page or the typographic arrangement.

Writing by form is a stimulant for some poets. It encourages them to write more and better than they would otherwise. The use of form can be a challenge which lulls the rule-making part of the mind to sleep and frees the imagination. It can add a game-like atmosphere to the writing which is similar to Scrabble or a crossword puzzle, but with much more personal expression. It can bring about "a sense of form" which can be useful in free verse pursuits.

The problem with fixed forms is they can make a poet write poetry which is mechanical, crabbed, inarticulate and rigid. Form can cause awkwardness in the production of a poem and awkwardness in the final expression. If you just had to make that meter or that rhyme scheme you may have wrenched the flow and spontaneity out of your verse, and for what?

To compensate for the problems which strict forms cause you can loosen up the rules. The rhyme scheme or meter can be altered to fit your poem. This is one aspect of poetic license. Editors will notice such things but many readers will not. At any rate a large part if not most of the poetry published in America today is free verse, and the use of form or lack of it won't matter in getting your poems published in many magazines. Thus, your decision to use form or not should depend on how much you find them facilitating and how much you find them debilitating. It should also depend on what you need to balance your artistic journey--on how much order, organization and self-discipline you have or have need of.

Poetry is not only an art, it is also a craft. Lack of either will hinder the other. Form alone will not a poem make. Form alone will only make verse. But, on the other hand, raw emotion is not a poem either until it is transformed by the magic of artifice.

Most modern poets do not like rules. That's why they are poets, because poetry is a rebellious medium. They want to be free to be creative and not feel like they are in the Army. But as the Bible says, "To everything there is a season/And a time for every purpose under heaven." There is a time in every poet's development to try a hand at fixed forms if only to learn some kind of balance between art and artifice.

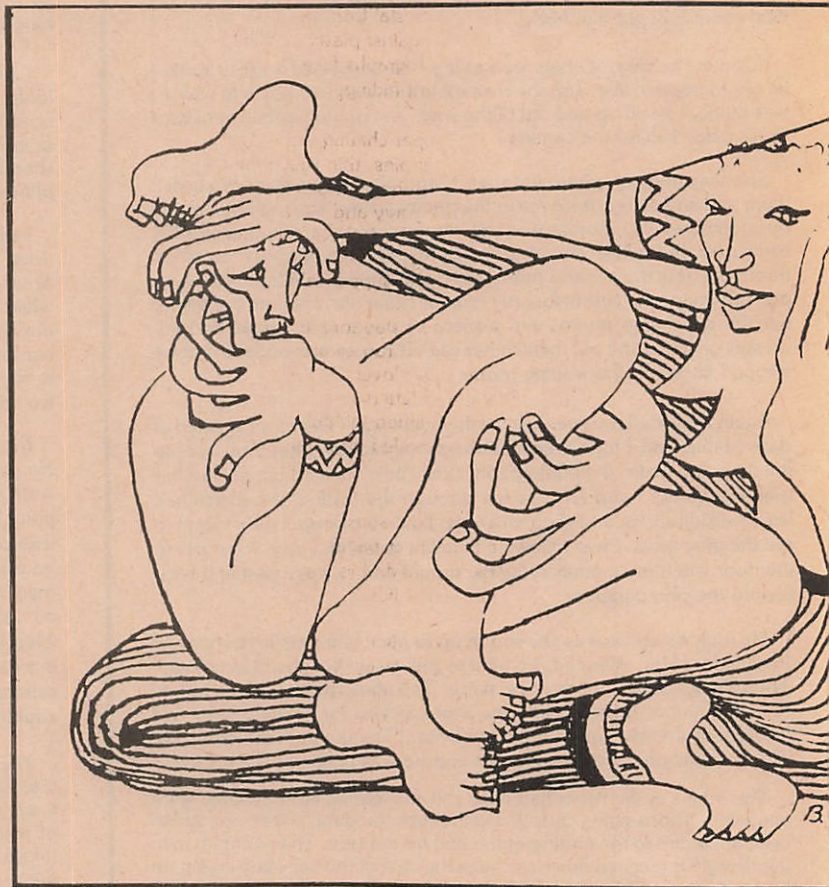
But this all deals with form of the sort which may be termed "mechanical form" as opposed to

"organic form." These terms were introduced by Schlegel in the early 1800's to contrast the rigid form of Neo-classic writing with the supple form of Shakespeare. To expand this concept, the fixed forms in general might be considered mechanical while the forms which are mentioned in the next paragraph might be considered organic.

If you approach the task of adding form to your writing you might gain by thinking of it in terms you already know. Mixing form in a poem might be compared to a dressmaker using a pattern, a cook using a recipe, an architect following a blueprint, an extrusion device getting fitted with a mold, a form being constructed for a sidewalk, a game plan being learned by football players, a formula being used by a math student, or a road map

being consulted by a driver. All these can be considered metaphors to have in mind when constructing a poem.

Robert Frost was a conscientious user of poetic form. He has compared free verse to playing tennis without a net. He followed mechanical form and also the vague metaphor of organic form. He said, "My object is true form--is, was and always will be--form true to any chance bit of true life. Almost any bit will do. I don't naturally trust a 'chance bit' to be true to any other object" (from *A Swinger of Birches* by Sidney Cox). How one writes a poem in correspondence to the form of a "chance bit of true life" is an aspect of form which is not under the easily explainable rule of artifice, but rather the intuitive feeling of art.



Still Life

As you push the door open
over the carpet covered with newspapers,
you notice
how every available ledge
bends from the weight
of the past.

Etched crystal from the Civil War
crowds against plastic flowers
and photographs face down,
to prevent fading.

The copper chafing dish
hides hairpins, thin rubberbands,
and those best recipes for apple crisp,
chicken gravy and biscuits
that bring back the whole family
chattering
around the supper table.

Daughters stay forever twenty-three.
Sons don't run away.
The eager lover
who hid letters in a hollow tree
has remained faithful
when beveled glass mirrors
haven't.

The yellow address book
needs fewer pages.
People, folded in linen envelopes,
fill up box lids.

Life exceeds the speed limit
fifty yards from the front porch.
Behind the new brass locks
clocks drag their arms
from one hour to the next.

Patricia McNeir

from The Roaring Stream

Time spends me long
trying to find out why.
My mind swells
like twelve dozen apples,
my body rolls
like a cart. The ground
shimmers, shudders, shuns
one shade. So many
ways the same things are.
The tongue is relentlessly
splitting sound, light
cutting itself on objects.
The eyes carve space
in shapes that breed
beginnings.

The fixed points
on the mind's surface
are bent into curves
by the somnolent breath.
The curves darken to cliffs
where sibyls dance above
the weird wanton valley of dreams.

Alfred Gross

You Go Back To It

to your earliest
childhood to where
your brother fell through
the hole in the outhouse
and vera lifted the lid
at the back
so he could crawl
out

lucky just lucky
we were playing
ante eye over
over the roof of the shed
when it happened

mom screaming and screaming
dipping him in the barrel
of rainwater
us kids we couldn't stop
laughing even though he
was still crying

now that he's a professor
at the university of saskatchewan
and an internationally recognized
authority on underwater
surveying for minerals

i wonder if george remembers
that summer when
he was 4 years old

when he fell into
some deep shit
and survived

garda maia penfold

Pomegranate

Pomegranate,
Honeycomb with red bees
And the blood red of heartbreak,
Biblical fruit that knows ancient myths,
I can never take you for granted.
Each time I open you and discover again
Your garnet seeds, seeds of magic,
Of witchcraft and Hades.
Powerful fruit,
You could be many things.
Red of sun and birth
You conceal your wealth,
Sparkling behind a sturdy leather skin,
A husk packed with jewels.

Shirley Mahar Svitavsky

Old Woman Hands

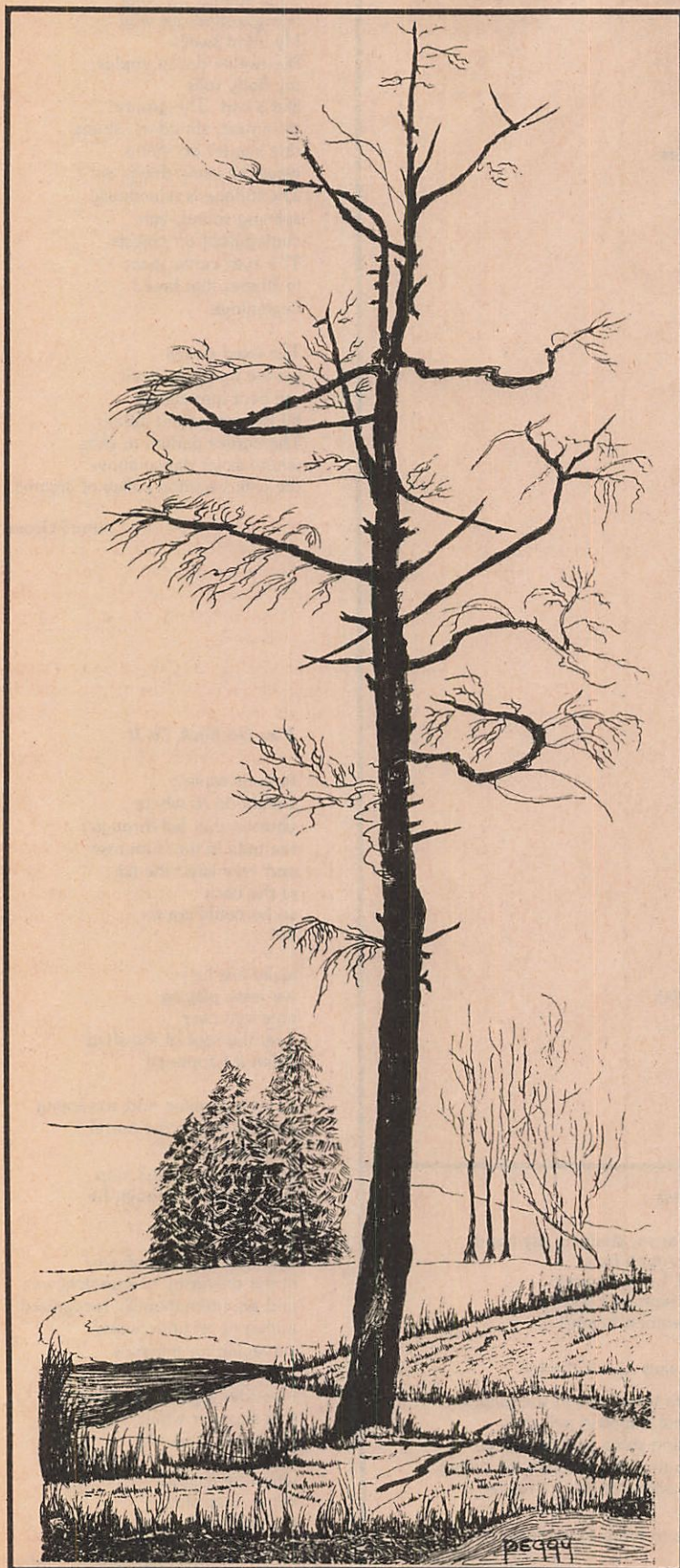
"Strange," said Tanya, studying my hand
finger by finger through hers
(not knowing that I was tripping)
"your hands are, woman hands
(she meant 'old woman hands')
like my mother's.
I wonder what makes hands change."

A dark blue breeze tore through the maples
so that leaves came tumbling pell mell
doing crazy flips and spins and pirouettes
sizzling orange on the walk before they settled.
"It comes from washing dishes," I replied,
knowing full well
how children love to jump in the leaves.

Joan Dobbie

Walking Around Mountains

by Talbot Bielefeldt



"We were naked!" the old man said, leaning his thin frame across the heavy campground table. "The little lady and I, standing in a little cove at the end of the lake, stark naked!"

He rocked back and cackled. Water dripped from tall fir trees. A young man and woman sat across from the storyteller on the damp table benches. Fifty yards away the sun shone on a broad meadow, where weeds poked through a skiff of fresh autumn snow. Backpacks and bundles of camping equipment lay in a pile at the edge of the clearing, away from the tree drip. Above the opposite end of the meadow stood a rocky peak, its ledges outlined in white.

"Now you have to understand," the old man went on, "camping down either side of the lake were Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, bird-watchers with binoculars, and God knows whatall. But we were walking around the mountain, we were halfway around, we were hot and dusty and smelled bad, and right then we were going for a swim!"

The woman wrote in a small notebook on the table. She was large, a stocky blonde. "Mr. Jonas, are you talking now about French Lake, over on the east side of the mountain?" she asked. "You were there, what, two or three days ago?"

"No, no, no, no, this was years ago," the old man said. "See, I was young then, and I didn't care, but I just didn't want to offend, you know. I wouldn't have minded just splashing around in that little cove, where all those Girl Scouts and whatnot wouldn't notice. But Sybl decides we got to swim all the way across, and when she gets her mind on something--stubborn? I tell you . . . But that's what it takes, walking around mountains. And that's what we like to do. You see, you start at one side, go on walking around until you get to the other, keep going until you get back where you started. Never have to backtrack, and you never go over the same ground twice. We'll pass some kids on the trail, like you, and they say, 'Where you coming from?' And we tell them, 'Frog Lake,' or 'Cooper Spur,' and then they say, 'Well, where you going?' And we say, 'Same place.' Same place!" He crinkled up his eyes and gave a wheezy laugh.

The woman was writing in her book, and Jonas directed his laughter at the young man next to her. The boy, tall, bony-featured youth, smiled back nervously.

"Where were you going on this trip?" the woman asked, nodding toward the meadow.

"Same place we started, don't you understand?" Jonas slapped the table, and waved at the rocky peak. "All the way around! That's the thing about walking around mountains. You always get back where you started. You

just got to be stubborn enough to keep walking. And she is, Sybl. Stubborn? Hell, yes--had to jump right into that lake with all those Camp Fire Girls or whatever hanging around."

The woman gave an audible sigh. "Do *you* have any children, Mr. Jonas?" she asked.

"Kids? Oh, hell no. I mean, I wouldn't have minded, but Sybl . . . Maybe we should have, but can you imagine walking around mountains towing a couple of little brats? Hm? And walking around mountains is what we do best. Anyway, we come out here, we got plenty of young people. Like you--you're our kids, you know that?"

The young man began to fidget with the zipper of his jacket, a green nylon uniform coat identical to the woman's. He looked away, over the meadow, as if searching for something above the peak. The grass in the meadow was melting out under the late morning sun, except where a patch of snow was preserved in the shadow of the equipment pile.

"So'd you get your swim?" the young man finally asked, "when you were going around the mountain?" He glanced at the woman next to him, as if unsure of his right to speak.

"Damn right we did!" Jonas said. "We figured once we were under the water, it wouldn't make any difference what we wore. But guess what?" He leaned close to the young man. "It was only six inches deep! That's right, we promenaded out of that cove just up to our ankles in front of the crowd, stark *naked*. Now, I wouldn't have minded splashing right back, but when Sybl decides she's going to do something--I mean, bullheaded? You just wouldn't believe . . . She says, 'Wait, it'll get better.' I said, 'Wait? Woman, you haven't made me wait so long in the altogether since our wedding night!' He erupted in another fit of laughter.

"You know," the young man said, "Forest Service doesn't like you swimming in lakes in wilderness areas. It adds to water pollution."

"Forest Service!" Jonas shouted. "I'll tell you what they know! Once they sent in these two kids--kids!--to *rescue* us, down around Crater Lake. Why those kids didn't know their heads from their fannies."

The woman closed her notebook and tossed her ball point pen onto the table top. "At Crater Lake it would have been *Park Service*," she said, looking away above the peak.

"Park Service--Forest Service . . . kids!" The old man made a sneezing noise. "I mean, these brats weren't any older than you are, and they come walking into camp--we'd had maybe one, two inches of snow, but it was a good camp, had the tent set up tight as a drum--and they come in telling us they want us to *leave*. Can you imagine? I ask them why, they say they think we're not 'adequately prepared.' *Adequately prepared?* We've been walking around mountains for thirty years! You think in thirty years you don't learn how to take care of yourself? Let me tell you, Sybl just tore into them. Hates being told what to do. Has to have everything her own way. Thirty years in the mountains, I still can't set up the tent without getting approval on every string and stake from the little lady. But that's okay, that's okay--she still doesn't know how to do her pack, and no matter how many times I tell her, she won't change. Pigheaded? She's walking along, comes to a stream, tries to walk across it like she's Jesus Christ! I mean . . ."

"You mean the stream at the other end of the meadow here?" the woman interrupted. She fumbled for her notebook again.

Jonas looked down at the table top. A plume of steam rose where a sunbeam played on the damp wood. "No. I don't know," he said. "People just see what they want to see."

After a moment, the young man said, "Go on about skinny-dipping in the lake. The one with the Girl Scouts."

"Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, whatever--I don't pay any attention to them," Jonas said. "They didn't pay any attention to us. You know, people see what they want to."

He looked down again, and the woman started to say something. The old man jerked his head up and cut her off. "But that water was *cold*!" he said. "Wasn't too bad in the shallow part, where the sun had got in and warmed it up. Real clear mountain water. You could see bottom. Whole trees lying down there. But you got out in the middle, you couldn't see a thing. I mean it was *deep*. Black! And cold? I could just feel the warmth being sucked out of me, down into that black hole. Stubborn woman! Nearly got me killed! Halfway across I could feel myself just slipping away, and I yelled to her, I said, hey--wait! But would she? Would she wait for me? Oh, no! She must have been freezing her own tail off, but she wouldn't say a word, just kept going, all alone, right through the water, like I wasn't even there."

He tapped each word out on the table top with a stiff finger. "And it's not the first time. Oh, no!"

"No?" the woman asked.

"I told her, woman, you're not Jesus Christ!" the old man said. "You can't walk on water. But listen? To me? Oh, no! She doesn't need my help."

"Are you talking about crossing the stream at the end of the meadow?" the woman tried again.

The old man ignored her. "I tell her, woman, you're soaking wet! You're freezing your goddamn tail off, and you know it! And she does know it, too, but she won't even listen to what she *knows*! Couldn't even talk to me. Got her hat on sideways, weaving around, bumping into trees, snow blowing all over, can't hardly stand, and she won't even talk to me! I say, look--I got the tent up, and it's up right, and without your help. You can sleep in it, or you can sleep out, but I'll be god-damned if I'm-going-to-chase-after-you!"

The old man rapped the words onto the grainy wood and his tapping seemed to echo off the walls of the distant peak. The echoes continued after the man was quiet. Continued, and grew louder.

"There it is," the youth said, jumping to his feet. The woman wrote in her book.

The helicopter set down in the meadow in a swirl of wet snow and dead grass. The pilot shut off the rotors and climbed from the bubble, looking out of place in his dark sportcoat and tinted glasses. He walked gingerly in loafers through the soggy grass to the young man standing by the equipment pile. The two of them picked up a long bundle wrapped in a nylon tarpaulin.

"Have to drag her far?" the pilot asked as they shuffled side by side toward the aircraft.

"Nope. This is about as far as she got." They laid the bundle on a grating above one landing skid, and the young man beckoned to the two people at the picnic table.

"Where'd *he* end up?" the pilot asked.

"In their tent, just back in the trees."

"What--she go out to pee or something, and get lost?"

The young man shrugged. "I guess they got separated before that."

The men strapped two packs onto the unloaded skid, and then the pilot helped Jonas into the cramped bubble. The pilot grinned at the woman as he walked around to his side of the aircraft. "Sorry I can't give you a lift," he said.

"That's okay," the woman said. "They pay you to fly, they pay us to walk."

"You can do it!" Jonas yelled from inside the bubble. "You can do it! All the way around!" The motor wailed. The old man kept talking as the helicopter lifted off, banked over the meadow, and began a long circle of the rocky peak, climbing to an altitude that would take him out of the hills.

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Poetry by Susan Moore

"You always have such a strange expression on your face," George says to his daughter as she walks into the kitchen. George lives with his seventeen-year-old daughter in an apartment that is big enough to allow them not to see each other very often.

George's daughter ignores his remark and pours herself a bowl of cereal and takes it back to her room to eat. George's daughter never eats with him. When she's home, she eats in her room. She's been eating in her room ever since she came to live with George four years ago. Her mother left for Europe with her third husband and told George it was his turn to take care of their daughter.

George thinks his daughter is reasonably bright, but she is not the apple of his eye. Sometimes, when she is being particularly obnoxious, he wonders if she is really his daughter. He knows it is possible that she isn't; he supposes it doesn't really matter anyway.

George teaches literature, mainly poetry, at the state university in his town. He teaches juniors and seniors and wonders occasionally if they are listening to him. He wonders occasionally if they even read what he assigns. But sometimes George has a student in one of his classes who makes up for all the others who don't seem to care.

Jeff is one of George's favorites. He never types his papers, but writes them in big capitol letters. George looks forward to reading Jeff's papers; he seems to have an appreciation for the language that George doesn't come across very often. Jeff comes to George's office and they talk; Jeff listens as though he enjoys hearing what George has to say.

One afternoon, when George is in his office having a discussion with Jeff, his daughter stops by. She tells George she won't be home until late because she is going out. George introduces her to Jeff, who smiles at her. George's daughter smiles back with an expression of such sweet charm that George thinks perhaps she is his daughter after all.

Later at home, George's daughter asks him a dozen questions about Jeff.

"Maybe you'd like me to invite him over sometime."

George's daughter says she would like that very much and kisses him on the cheek. George doesn't remember her ever kissing him before.

Jeff comes to dinner one night and they all sit at the dining room table. George has never had dinner with his daughter before. George's daughter talks to Jeff about poetry while George looks on in pleasant amazement. He has never heard his daughter talk about poetry. Now he is embarrassed to think he ever doubted that she was his daughter.

George goes to bed while his daughter and Jeff are still in the living room talking. George leaves his bedroom door open, not because he wants to eavesdrop, but because the rise and fall of their voices is pleasing to his ears. George likes to hear conversation in his apartment.

The next day in class, Jeff asks a lot of questions. He starts to ask questions that George can't answer, leaving George to reply, "I suppose there are several views on that point."

After class, Jeff asks George if he uses the same lecture notes in his classes every year.

"Well, I generally teach the same subjects every year," George says. He is beginning to get uncomfortable.

"Sometimes I just wonder, professor, what the point of all this is." Jeff has never called George professor before. George is uncertain how specific or general Jeff's remark about the point of it all is.

Jeff and George's daughter start to see each other on a regular basis. George worries at times that Jeff is too old for her; he can't really remember if she's ever had a boyfriend before. But she is so pleasant to be around now that George ignores his worries.

Jeff asks questions in class that make George more and more uncomfortable. George starts hoping that Jeff will stop coming to class, and looks forward to the days when he doesn't have to teach. One day in class Jeff says he thinks literary criticism was invented to give people with no imagination something to write about.

"Well, yes, that's certainly been said before," George says.

"I just wonder, professor, what the point of all this is. If everyone in this room spent their time writing poetry instead of criticizing others . . .

"Well, not everyone can write poetry," George says. He knows he has a point there.

But if everyone spent time doing what they *could* do," Jeff's voice interrupts, and he talks for the last few minutes of class.

That night, George's daughter tells him that Jeff is thinking of dropping out.

"If Jeff wants to be a poet, he should be," George tells his daughter, "but he shouldn't make me feel bad about what I do for a living."

George's daughter asks him if he has ever written any poetry.

"There are too many poets in this world already," George says. He likes that answer and repeats it a few times. "Yes, indeed, too many poets in this world already. Yep, too many damn would-be poets in this crazy world. Enough stupid poets on *this* planet." George's daughter stares at him for a few minutes, then goes into her room.

Jeff stops coming to class. George wonders if he's left school, but he doesn't ask his daughter. A few weeks later, on George's daughter's birthday, he shows up in the evening to eat birthday cake with George and his daughter. George doesn't ask Jeff where he's been and Jeff doesn't talk about poetry. George's daughter smiles at Jeff all evening and they hold hands on the couch while George washes the dishes.

Jeff shows up in George's office one day as George is preparing for class.

"I've been thinking a lot, professor. I think I'm going to drop out."

"Drop out and write poetry, eh?" George says. "How charming." He doesn't know why, but he is offended.

"No, I don't write poetry. I'm not really sure what it is I do. But you know, your daughter writes some pretty good stuff."

"My daughter?" George looks at Jeff in disbelief. "She never mentioned it."

"It's good stuff, professor," Jeff says. "You should read it."

George returns home that evening to find a note from his daughter, written on the inside of a thank-you note:

"Jeff and I have eloped. Best wishes, Sarah."

George sits in front of the television and thinks about Sarah. He wonders what the poetry Sarah has written is like. He wonders if Sarah is too old for him to have the marriage annulled. He wonders if Sarah will come back to visit, and he thinks about what he has lost.