

# Lies and Their Falsehoods

*A Collection of Poems from 2009*

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## Family Stories At Last I Hope

naturally this will be the year  
to begin the deep stories of me  
my parents / my grandparents in a way  
it won't be possible to write without a fiction  
lies as some might call it  
but if there are no falsehoods  
or nothing seeming so  
what are lies but fine style  
and useful glue

## Very

I can feel her wondering  
why answers aren't there  
she is cold I suppose  
maybe some tears  
but her view on the world  
wiggles too much  
she is I suppose  
sweet

## Imagining Is as Good as Witnessing

someone will find me  
maybe she will  
if she does she'll say something  
like I love you so very very much  
she'll call someone to move me  
she'll put down sheets so their shoes  
won't dirty the floors  
she'll vacuum after  
she'll put all my things into the trash  
after I've been made into ash  
she'll try to fulfil my requests  
but I know she'll put me next to my parents  
and visit only once a year

## **Hard Work**

somehow I need to convince  
them that I have some value  
hard to do when you don't  
really believe it yourself

## All Not

simply put the way  
to salvage a long haul  
is to follow it with a short one  
when we find the precise way  
to frame it / to put in in simple  
words we find nothing but old wreckage  
like a ship that went down at sea  
after a sappy romance and a mistake  
how to put it / we are lost in our bets  
that have grown so large  
that all in is not much in

## Flat Story

the little story has been sitting  
on the mantle for 35 years  
at times its edges curling and singeing  
while it hung over the fires below  
that occasionally opened up  
I've been thinking of reading it  
sitting on the couch  
lying back really  
on the couch thinking  
I should read that story  
every time it's maybe next time  
I pictured it getting better  
deepening by age and distillation  
now it's time  
for the story to go away

## The Last Word on Poetry

how is the poem understood  
reading?  
never reading / no one who reads  
a poem can ever understand it  
no matter how many times it's  
read / the only way  
writing it / whenever  
you find a poem write it



## Among Travelers

before the sun rises  
snow showers  
really frozen drizzle turned white  
slant across the still empty parking lot  
the cold is deepening  
one car joins the scene  
seen from above in my hotel room  
last night reluctantly I turned up the heat  
the welcome sunrise is an hour away  
the cardoor slams I think  
and hot breath smudges the tack sharp  
edges around the driver's head  
two people / one day

## Someday a Hand Will Write

I wanted to write  
I really did  
and I knew the effect I wanted  
what I wanted you to believe after reading my letter  
but though I thought  
for hours / really for months  
I couldn't think even  
of the first two words  
instead the perfect thing to say  
only is the silence of a white  
page on my desk

## Inspiration

she is nearby  
she saw the sun set  
tonight just as I did  
she perhaps is standing on a hill  
perhaps under a tree  
she is now what  
a man might wish for  
if only they would meet  
I am merely a shepherd  
in the scheme of things  
sunrises and sunsets count the same  
if she be nearby  
our breaths have crossed  
at least this  
but not more

## Trip End

dismounted and resting  
I'm not sure I can make it back  
half the trip long past  
only a bit left  
but too tired  
too far

## Waiting

the package on the front stoop  
perhaps a book perhaps equipment  
hope and expectation  
a story or a thing  
of course to find out  
requires a knife  
a slice or cut  
maybe tomorrow

## Undertaken

I can French girl

I can Italian girl

I can Brazilian girl

I can if necessary chubby girl

I can my new shoe line

I can not like my parents

I can eve...

## Screenish

the characters spend their days  
on the beach and their nights  
in the back reaches of a shallow cave  
the ocean never cedes to silence  
their conversations seem scripted  
by writers living in LA  
well everything's hot both places  
in the end it's real  
it's real fiction

## The Bug With You

the camera won't focus on you  
leaves and trees are fine  
buildings are fine  
on you is the problem  
too soft maybe  
the computer needs the hard edges  
something to hold attention  
my memory of it is fine



## On The Walls

mirrors when perfect  
are perfect liars  
telling you what you  
know is false  
someday though  
it'll spill all

## Webcams

how they do it  
we watch and it's one way  
alone another  
perhaps or it doesn't matter  
perplexed by the privacy of it  
we need to sit and watch  
later everyone holds back  
their tears

## Yes They Are Different

we have places here  
as poor as there  
what is common there  
can be found here  
what's hard to find here  
requires no expertise there  
I am certain those with power  
would not mind a little of here on top  
sprinkled on a lot of there here

## End of W

tonight is the last night  
of a bad era  
the worst president of my lifetime  
so far is about to pass into the past  
he has brought us to great disgrace  
and has ruined many lives  
he has sneered at what made our country great  
I wish I could pity him  
but it wasn't an accident he did those things  
he was raised to not understand difficulties  
and what calms him makes him stupid  
tomorrow will be a good day

## Dedication of a Gift Outright

on the knee of a ridge  
a new flagpole  
brushed and bright in its backlight  
replaced the old one  
wood and white  
which had gathered dark streaks  
and peels  
the flag too was new and its thick  
weave let the light  
through and made the dark blue  
light / and upright  
for years the flag hung blue field  
down / and tattered  
at its flapping end from storms  
of many kinds  
everything replaced in naïve renewal  
and that's why I paused and stared  
until the tear storm passed  
and my eyes could only  
look up

## If I Can

if I could I would ruin them  
those who put profit over lives  
they think they are saving themselves  
but they are strangling themselves  
and I will help them do it

## A Little Bit of Tonight

sharp cadence makes  
a good dance song  
some misguided rhymes  
a lengthy melody  
a decent dance song  
suitable to celebrate  
everyone who's gone

## Figure It Out

the lesson of mistakes  
is to make them into art  
simple errors / grand performances  
repeat the gestures that broke everything  
when you do it wrong do that verything  
once more / and if you like rhymes try this  
there once was a house painted orange  
whose shutters were tinted in silver



## In Santa Cruz

on the street  
where else  
she passed by so quick  
I cannot now  
describe her because her form  
filed into my memory too fast  
for words to stick to it

## Remembering Rivers

the river is certainly  
inky black tonight  
as it draws down the mountains and hills  
foolishly someone's built a bridge  
thinking the crosswise traffic  
would last / instead  
the river's curling surface  
knows who the joke's on

## A Letter Not Written

when you listen to reports  
of what questions I asked  
and the answers given keep  
recall that even if all the information  
exchanged is what was reported  
who said which parts  
which were questions  
can never be clear

## Quick Thoughts on It

if only what I said  
to you could be heard and what  
you said were not fiction  
filled then maybe a way of speaking  
could be figured

## Story Starts

figure the strange  
foster slabs of tubes  
don't fear cycling through time  
telling stories that recycle  
make up what has more wings  
than legs / shred your suspended  
longing and high order lower torsos  
dying and being transformed and disappeared

## What is the Truth

writer gone away  
the words he wanted to put in order  
left behind still in their little dictionaries  
the paper waiting for ink  
catching fire in a black wood stove  
enclosed in a stone fireplace  
the ink in the last pen starting to freeze  
after a 3-day-long winter storm of snow and ice  
now clear and utterly blue  
his greatest tool the eraser  
that would put behind them  
his mistakes of choice  
his wrong imaginations  
the truth

## Meet Back Here

surrounded by pictures  
this place is the heart of present  
in the bounded past  
no one wants to depart  
but departure is all there is  
I suppose the beauty under glass  
has a message / reflects on the skeptical  
places more value on unearned value  
on the wall in front of me  
a picture the same color as the wall  
a chinese painting with all the detail on the right  
in a gradient piled to the right  
and the top of a mountain as if above a cloud  
all else the void / a great null  
like a comfortable couch  
a comfortable place to sit  
only and alone

## Single Ambition

her cart needed to be repacked  
her bags piled on the table  
3 women 2 a mother-daughter pair from Japan  
watch and later question her  
before she eats she prays  
she prays for 5 solid  
minutes before her first spoonful  
she stands and bends to answer  
their questions later / after I've gone  
and can't know anything about her  
she repacks her cart  
walks to the small redwood park  
by the transamerica bldg and curls  
up for the cold night



## The Cormac McCarthy

sitting 2 doors down  
from Cormac McCarthy  
you're bound to lose  
a comma here and there  
but when it comes to quantum  
the Bell inequality makes as much  
sense as Cormac's reticence to speak  
of writing

## On Google Earth Today

the place is cut up  
the woods have been flattened  
houses built already falling down  
like a memory I wish it were still mine  
who checks with the next guy  
needs at the other side of the world  
are needs no one needs

## Pop Art

art makes the filling  
the crust is your doubts  
when a question is asked  
it's time for the sound track  
to swell / meanwhile all  
the while you talk someone  
behind you keeps typing  
you wonder  
where will that transcript  
pop up

## Desire I

she's not in the mood  
her back is to herself  
among her pursethings are my teeth  
she's spent half the night brushing  
her hair is too bright even  
for the reading light's light  
she might turn over in the night  
I'll remain behind her in her  
dreams she's holding the man of her dreams  
her hand is behind her  
she is holding him erect  
what she has  
in mind hasn't entered her mind  
all thoughts reflect away  
the mirrors all chuckle

## Burdened

the days of no pay dragged on  
but the days were filled with persistent work  
the fields waited in the wet mornings for the plow  
for the scythe the rake and wagon  
the cows waited in the cool dewed mornings for the milking  
for the feed the opened door and grazing grass  
the chickens waited in the self-warmed coops for the hands under the hens  
for the feed the unlocked passages to the yard and the sunwarmed bugs  
my mother waited in her lumped moist bed for the presunrise wakening sounds  
for the farmy breakfast the invitation to work and the rest of the day  
splayed like a hog butchered to its back waiting  
the final cuts and icing down  
passing time by radio only and borrowed books  
cooking on the coal range and the smell of it against scythed hay  
she remembered these days the night of the storm  
whose end marked passings

## Old Tapes

Rachel Fury can she sing  
or are her dark looks all there is  
how she moved next to Floyd  
I still watch and wish I could more

## Photography 101

so how do they make them  
the photos so strange  
extrareal hyperreal  
what I don't have is  
the answer to the question  
what don't you have

## On The Attack On Duncan

when the truly famous come around  
you forget they are ordinary  
but filled with power  
that rage toward them seems to you  
now  
as rage toward the ordinary  
which is what the truly famous harbor  
you forget the rage they receive  
is deserved / O deserved as anything can be



## LOL

they wondered how much music  
were in the lies  
or maybe the exaggerations  
they asked questions that made little sense  
but I was tired and not eager to spend  
effort understanding  
they were like flies around good laying zones  
the fact it might icestorm made no difference  
that someone very smart might attend  
only made me more nervous  
they thought I would welcome it

## Funereal Sounds

the guitars and amps are set  
to make the strings sound pure  
and undistorted / the sort of sound  
one expects the lightened bluegreen tops of waves  
to sound like when they are just about to break  
the only people who can play them set this way  
have glass fingers and opaque hearts

## Consolation Number One

the colors don't speak for anyone  
the colors are not true  
to themselves let alone the lights on them  
by dimming the thinning  
but adding density and substance  
I capture them / I mutilate them  
the colors can't fight back  
they fight through

## Upon a Time

wasn't the day afloat when you found it  
was it upstream or down from you  
how many breaths did it take  
to get to it from shore  
I saw a boat earlier  
was it that day  
some logs appeared to be floating nearby  
do things consort with time  
I remember she loved a particular song  
that played several times  
that day

## Still On

the song goes on  
we drive the road that rocks  
the car like a gentle long wave  
ahead the sun blares  
ahead the sheer cliffs are but a guess  
we've made meanwhile the song  
goes on though nothing else does  
besides the magpie on the line

## Plan For Now

survive innovation  
and post it on the paste post  
this week we will invent  
the new art form which will differ  
from earlier art forms  
by being like their differences  
to do this we will first need to identify  
subproblems and in this case  
the first thing to invent a form humor  
not based on funny

## One Fine Day

the field / cold / late november  
the hay / long not harvested / has frozen  
brittle yellow / frosted in white / in clear  
refracting ice / I am by the hummock / a rock  
and small bush / here it seems warm / blue sky  
the sun high / some hay thawed / it feels  
like yesterday / it feels cold / it feels warm

## Able to Lament

just think  
she would grow up  
and I would grow old  
in the same hell made by  
the provocateurs of greed



## After Watching

some fantasies  
cannot be revived  
others simply watched  
others evaporate

## Camming

the camera mounted somewhere  
viewing a road lined with snowbanks  
middle of the night and one streetlight camera right  
after watching 20 minutes  
a car slips by taking 5 seconds and 4 frames  
some light on its roof like revelation  
of place over time

## One Time Once More

one time when I was lost  
I drove across a familiar bridge  
odd shade of green and a turntable  
to open a passage to tall boats  
instead of being a fact maybe  
this was a story I didn't know  
I had started / to write like this  
requires a car / a bridge  
and lost

## Fleece City

steep hill even in a low gear  
the legs find it hard  
the bad body doesn't help  
I've learned that only  
constant work keeps it working  
so much of my mind is hidden  
why wonder why I can't know it

## Westerns and Modern Music

on a western street near big mountains  
the mix of rainwater horseshit and blood  
is just a bit more foul than the flux  
of music making in the saloons in there they  
do not create anything  
all they do is manipulate sound  
most of it sounds  
like a bad night in hell

## O Memory

waking I cycle through  
each bedroom this could be  
before settling on the north  
in Europe / the light from a colder  
blue east than usual tells me this is right  
the breathing though and the blonde hair  
over sleeping eyes / her not watching eyes  
the warmth under the feather throw  
her deep breathing she  
falling asleep I've begun to think  
what will waking be

## No One Here But Us Bovinians

what is there to give  
the woman who wishes me to explain  
who should win the prize  
for doing what I do  
in the place where I live  
and my name never comes up

## News You Can Use

the colors that make no sense  
cover a brush made from a wrong dream  
together they paint an inflexible bird  
on a supple canvas of gorgeous skin  
he deadpanned never taking his eyes  
from his work as he brushed bright  
orange paint on the stomach of a model  
in his glass-enclosed studio under the grandstands  
at the Sambadrome where Rio's Carnival parades  
ended Tuesday at dawn



## Why the Old

a room fills with music  
sit still and imagine  
see whether you can hear  
the sounds of the music  
I'm describing a room filled with music  
that has started as a small breath  
behind a small chair  
each step it takes the music unfolds  
a small sheaf as if of twigs  
that with a careful unpacking  
turns into the web of a complex living tree  
whose leaves block the light from windows  
whose growing branches no longer twigs  
block the door soon the room has no room  
for anything but this music  
is it Mahler is this Shakespeare

## First Base

what of the beauty of old movies  
the projector light flickering  
the screen receptive and reluctant  
the actors forgetting who to be  
shattering mirrors for sake of an art  
that can last only a century  
in the pursuit of art  
the one who wins the most  
is the one with most flickers  
the most stumbles

## Last Supper

it's night  
my camera will tell me later  
that the sky is a death blue  
the motel is faux adobe  
the ocean makes a sound effect  
like the sound of tire rubber  
fast on hot asphalt  
beneath the palms  
orange walls  
this looks to me  
like a good resting place  
good enough to be a final one  
if it comes to that  
but for now steak

## Women Came and Went

behind the screen where I'm typing this  
the coarse video of a bouncy song  
is playing / one blocky pixel column alone  
visible and what's moving there is in sync  
with the music made from bits and hot wires  
if only these words wound around elegance  
the way the guitarist's fingers do the strings

## More Than 3

one day David Foster Wallace  
wrote just one sentence  
for us that would be a bad day  
with 93 footnotes  
320 endnotes more punctuation  
than in all Dostoevsky combined  
and the first 719 digits of  $\pi$   
in correct order as parts of clauses  
footnotes and endnotes when read  
in proper order he wrote more  
than everyone reading this poem  
ever could in all our lifetimes times  $\pi$

## What It Is You Straight

nonlinear  
the jump cut  
episodic in randomized jumbles  
the best way to fill in detail  
without the boredom of straight lines  
and the waste of time to make them straight

## Tourniquet

dates are just numbers  
we can subtract them  
add them sometimes  
underneath their representation  
lie the memories and thoughts  
of people who some of them  
wish not hope not project not  
I am among the fleshly ones  
and rampant

## Experts Testify

they said

innovation needs the government to increase funding

innovation needs companies to invest that money in the future

innovation needs the nonprofits to act wisely

but people need nothing / people are not part  
of the innovation equation



## Not For Me

my father never grew old  
in the poetic manner  
he didn't wander off the path  
home through the woods  
lured by an off key bird  
then a ruby rock / a barking wolf  
no brambles and briars to catch  
on his sweater / no darkness coming  
on / his eyes across mine at the dinner  
table showing lost / no  
he simply dropped to his knees  
one night and called out to me  
like a coyote under a window  
in the night

## The Middles

two crows  
rain  
three crows  
a blessing  
four crows  
heaped up  
to tell God  
in the garden—  
petals like  
a thousand crows

## A Simple Place to Sit

the water that forms the river  
that rushes past on the quick  
carries in suspension the land  
my parents walked on all through their lives  
I can mark their births and deaths  
I can scan from one end of them to the other  
a thing impossible for them / sitting here  
I can compute their value  
few cried when I told them  
there were not many to tell  
the water that forms the river  
has been this way many times before  
has carried the soil before  
one day none will be left  
soil like the departed  
the stairs I climbed  
the barn I hid in  
the fields I ran across  
the woods I pushed through  
even some of the trees I climbed  
I can imagine they did too  
it's lonely without them  
only I am left to make up who they were  
and tell everyone so that one day  
perhaps when my soil's all washed away  
down to the deep oceans  
people will cry and wish they had not left  
so silently / in the dark / when the water was in full flow

## Reluctance

the days the important things happened  
the sense of loss hung low then blew downriver  
today the clues make no sense  
they are in fact invisible nearly  
my reckoning will be near the truth  
by definition as they say  
but this weighs so heavy  
I cannot write it  
cannot write the truth I must make

## Coal or Wood?

the clock hands moved ahead  
the harsh look of time on speedup  
a coal fire in the oven baking rough bread  
the woman later to be known  
as my mother wheels the wheelbarrow  
from the woodpile to the backdoor  
for warmth tonight she has chosen  
the woodfire

## You Will Walk in the Footsteps of Death

just an animal  
a reptile even  
but with personality  
she never liked me  
and when we moved here  
she began to fear me  
we moved right when my father died  
I went back home and we were moved  
when I got back / did I take on  
the aura of death

## Deep Emotion for a Low Animal

just an animal  
reptile even  
but today when she lay dead  
eyes open  
her color still green but graying slowly very slowly  
she like people I've known who died  
was not there  
there was a she inside  
and that she was gone  
Jo had come down and told me  
I think she's gone  
just a reptile  
whom I've known for 18 years  
she was gone

## Really Relieved

thank goodness  
Dick and I are depressed though  
Cid passed away early wednesday  
morning / she was definitely  
slowing down but really faded fast  
monday/tuesday / I didn't think her  
chances of making it  
through the night were very good  
when I put her to bed  
tuesday night / when I  
went to get her wednesday  
morning / she was gone  
she's at the dr's office now  
Dr. Voss will let us know if it was old  
age and simply her time or  
if she was ill / neither of us thought  
she would go before Lu  
really miss her



## Gone

the phrases are so easy to say  
the meaning is hidden in several metaphors  
what made a thing the thing it was  
has disappeared / science says  
there is not much to it  
everything else says there is

## Harsh Lighting

things left behind  
forget you as fast  
as you forget them

## Greg Laing

though he loved living there each winter  
he did not want the surgeons to treat his leg  
when it exploded from a tumor while he sat  
on a balcony overlooking the ocean  
a task he took on every winter  
instead they flew him to Boston  
where they amputated and later he died  
taking all the historical knowledge  
only in his head with him  
all that work in the special collections room  
left undone / ah but the warm sun in winter  
on a balcony in Goa

## Chores

and when I get home tonight  
don't forget the door  
let's me in too

## Horizon Looking

we notice he scans the landscape  
as he accompanies the body  
to its home / at the end  
he salutes the coffin  
then searches the horizon  
driving to the small town  
he would study each ridge and stream  
the story told of all this  
and the movie that showed it to those who won't read  
tell of these things / but never with explanation  
this is what makes it a story

## Don't You Know

desire paints with sleek thighs  
(as paintbrush)  
the direction of falling  
required by the hungry protagonist  
known as undefined direction

## Clemson

cloud broken pink sky up to zenith  
temp dropping into the 60s  
in a scrapyard of skeletal trees  
perched near the top  
here in the South  
the long tailed and boyant mockingbird  
mocks the songs of all the stilled birds  
and dried up novels and stories  
as I said  
here in the South

## Tired Song

the lake's sunk by drought  
it's an old army corps trick  
a river turned into a lake  
but because laziness is the easy answer  
the lower the lake the more like a river it is  
and now the old bridges show  
bridges across the river  
ready to swallow the fat and eager  
water skiers who don't know they're  
skiing up the lazy river



## Yes I Believe I'll

easy for us to say  
something like that  
I don't think they're big  
on chihuahuas down there  
she did something to it  
tent city in Sacramento  
tent city in Brooklyn  
time to bag it

## Advice from a F/C Writer to a Deperate Writer

not the end yet  
let's stay with it

## Debate Without Question

so tired I can hardly  
see this / the day's poem  
is the no poem / the day's debate  
just a show

## On Hearing My Name

she said  
who  
he said my name  
she rang out oh my god  
she held her face in her hands  
like something would fall off

# Newspaper Review of 'The Life of a Poet Not Yet Deceased Nor Threatening to Be'

I cried till  
I passed out

## Tongue Tied

red dress  
black blue black hair pulled back  
made up well  
thoroughly smiling  
flared skirt of the dress  
black heels  
the radiance of her future  
versus the rest of it

## Once and Lonesome

branches down from ice  
trees too / lawns burned white  
from the extremes of cold and wet  
the town is battlegroundish and hightailing it for Spring  
when we pass through / on our way  
I suppose  
to the fork in the river  
each passing to its own sea

(North City)(Dead of Winter)(Warm Scene)

imagine this  
two in their cold north city past midnight  
low clouds facing snow forming above  
below the city lights fadedly suffuse  
the satin bottom of those clouds  
an almost imaginary yellow  
the two walk / their gloved hands curled  
around each other's  
there is nothing to say  
they've decided long ago  
not from dislike or despair  
but from everything to be said  
having already been emptied  
into each other / after this walk  
as after every other walk for decades  
they will like their gloved hands already are  
curl around each other resuming  
their knot of entanglement  
nothing sexual about it  
for now the questions in their minds  
each with their own questions  
but always the same ones  
are whether the particolored dog in the blue-like-velvet  
house ahead will bark tonight waking its masters  
to window-light-emitting rage or curiosity  
and whether once they reach the bridge  
serving the sides of the river flowing  
its surface to a black satin shine as every night it does  
the snow will break through and their  
velvety coats will slowly whiten  
and what that will mean  
for the curling in cold that will become the warmth of their comfort  
that's always predictably  
(and something else)  
inevitable



## Elisa's Speech

and she said  
this is what she wrote  
"this life is so still  
sometimes  
forgetting even happens  
when the moment  
is just  
the same"  
and her simple speaking  
becomes the stillness  
no one forgets

## They Cross a Bridge

they paused over the river  
the night around them / the black river moving below  
you'd think streetlights would scribble themselves on the water  
but the snow was too heavy  
the wind too festive  
their thick gloves wouldn't permit their fingers to mesh  
so instead they curved their hands around each other's  
with the snow so heavy  
they wouldn't have been able to find their way home  
unless each step counted itself off  
like a line of soldiers counting off  
getting ready to march to war

## Ms Unmentioned

how to answer  
the snippy message  
worded as a passive missive  
yes I meant the sleazy echoes  
because that's how the message seemed to me  
I composed a poem in my brilliant and fertile  
mind but filed it instead somewhere in here  
where I toss them in as if into an old open cellar  
filled with trash other homes / other lives

## **Too Tired**

with uncertain discussions  
confidence is at a low

## Fog Toward Home

the fog was too thick  
for driving so my clever device  
showed the way  
her gentle voice like an unreal lover  
or an imaginary mother  
told me which way the road bent  
and her detailed display  
was like a compass on a map  
and the fog though enough  
to slow us down never impeded  
our progress toward redemption

## Clemency

certainly everyone knows the words  
to the song forgotten yearly  
in an effort to keep the dogs  
from digging up the old facts  
naturally ghosts are involved  
they says dogs sniff the ground  
no longer walked on  
this is the scent of diminishment  
that drips away only on the hottest days  
when it's the worst year  
wake me up

## Again Once Again

in Amboy they filmed  
scenes today for a horrific movie  
in which the towed SUV was perfectly lit  
but the wind and cigarette didn't get along  
and so they needed to do it again  
with the focus repulled and the driver  
freshly pee-ed and the well-done-up young  
actress in a dull suit though Amboy  
was bright and coming alive again after  
its demise like this movie which must be a remake  
of The Hitcher

## I Imagine

she sits by her window  
probably / regretting her choices  
while the cold air outside tries to grab  
the wet in the wind and festival it  
into crazed confusion  
and (no one works tomorrow)  
her confession of lying down  
wrongly rightly motivates her contribution  
to the cold air's project via the dulled  
transmission through the glass  
did I mention this all takes place in a northern city  
in the tail end of a typically dark-dayed winter  
and that had the choice of a try out followed  
by possibly a do-over been one physics in its godorific glory and power  
permitted perhaps / that is had the haps had it so /  
I would be in the room which behind her glassward gaze  
is sweltering hot and not on the street below  
framed by the lights of two opposing streetlights  
and thus in the cold dark and obscure like a Caillebotte  
black lump in a cognitive corner and bless me  
the choice is not clear / the night is dark  
you see



## Single Fringed

one day the walls became  
thicker / I mean the walls  
held back more conversations  
no one wanted to hear and I have  
to admit the heat held in by those walls  
would make a winter night lumped in  
I would imagine the small scale of the effects  
walls make and who would benefit  
but while I sit here typing two women are wondering  
about in their minds and mine  
and hungering for the falling shields of love-lost walls

## Meaning is in the Guitar Tonight

the café was in the basement  
of a curvilinear mall and being empty  
the hallways and curved stairways  
swirled the music into peaks and troughs  
and soon I saw the lighthaired woman  
sitting up front and off to the side but  
she alone listened except one other  
he and his computer played well  
he sang with authority and a small dose of tears  
but she smiled and her mouth moved to the words  
with no one else to look at (save the other)  
the song loops onward with repetition without  
variance / what the other sees is what  
he cannot again have / those who labor  
on as others know what he means

## Green Line / One of Many

and but so the day will come  
when the bouncing line  
will settle down  
and lie flat once and for all  
once more

## Deathlike Fatigue

the fatigue I feel  
can never go away  
never be relieved by sleep  
no amount of rest is available  
why do I persist?

## Important Religious Ideas

the men and old women  
carve dolls up on the mesa  
tell stories to tourists  
behind the shabby homes  
stray dogs gather and plot  
their escape in the cars about to depart  
dolls wrapped in paper  
stuff into pepsi cartons

## Flagstaff Views

after a week of warmth  
the snow shocked with its color  
the color of everything  
but cold / I find the furlike white  
coverings on every top a distraction  
to the production of art

## Summary Love

in the end  
the machine was programmed  
to make him love her  
so when he returned to the future  
he would love the woman she was modeled on

## Love Bed

she finds the carelessness liberating  
the odor of leaving precedes the endings  
she is polishing the bottoms of tables / of chairs  
her bed is singing itself to sleep  
the mattress is slightly yellowed  
is faintly smelling of urine  
twice she failed to find me  
agreements are cold fillings / hinderances  
the fur blanket at first for show  
became our revolving interest  
night after night and sometimes day  
we meet at the door sometimes / our keys clinking  
like wine glasses over a candle flame  
one day she ordered a stool  
and never told me why  
the surprise she said was surprisingly surprising  
I took it as her language challenge  
one day we stopped and it feels like yesterday



## Differences Are Not Minuses

yesterday is like today  
the only difference is  
it's possible to remember yesterday  
possible only to imagine today

## What History Will Look Like

a man has put a pier in a bay  
the wood posts are treated for decay  
and constant wet  
he has sunk them deep / down to stone  
there is no moment when the water  
is not rubbing up and down each post  
green life and barnacles have grabbed onto the posts  
and they hold onto their coherence  
if the man doesn't persist  
or if men don't come after to persist  
these posts will dissolve away  
though we know it  
we cannot imagine it from moment to moment  
only the befores and afters  
and some glimpses in between

## Like Her

she like others like her  
is unusual in her affect on me  
unknown and changed accent  
she is foreign except for her shape  
trees beg to throw shadows  
after she passes

## Vision Flash 48

The following report introduces the reader to a category of visual descriptions that, by virtue of their simplicity and elegance, may represent a major step in vision research. First attempts at descriptive formalisms almost unerringly produce systems that bog down in their own generality and apparent power; restrictions to classes of objects are viewed as a compromise of reality in its evasive detail. Unfortunately this leads to the eventual mapping out of important structural information from the aspiring formalism and, hence, a need for other powerful procedures for recovering this loss.

## Defined the Same Way

Suppose we have a husband coming home after his wife has retired for the night. He is interested in knowing whether she is indeed in bed, but fearing to turn on the light, he looks at the white pillow and sees a dark, undefined profile. Since this is where his wife usually is, and since he saw what he expected to see, he concludes that he has “seen that his wife is in bed.” Although there are imaginatively many possible things that could have caused him to be deceived in this judgement, he stands firm in his conviction.

## Movie Thinking

why does she cry seeing any child  
why does she crave the sight of them  
their touch / was she once a mother  
if so how could she be once  
a mother and not now

## Reading for Fun and Profit

she prefers words first  
then the sharp embrace  
she is willing to pay for each page  
but she wants the pages first  
when the books end she heads for the trains  
years later he is unwilling to stop  
paying so he delivers the words / the pages  
when it's time to pay  
he pays the one closest by

## Art Artist

great thinker  
maybe  
but where's your *magnum opus*  
now I need to deal  
with what has come along



## Schmaltz

the song playing now  
reminds me of the place  
I heard it first after many years  
walking through the mall  
that ends at the train station  
in greater Hong Kong  
the people there  
so little / so many  
moving in every direction  
the song part of a video  
playing from flatscreens  
all over suspended from the ceiling  
they are there now I know  
because in Hong Kong  
they always are always there

## Never-Stops Wind

when the wheatfields bow  
away from the wind  
and the tumbleweeds run down  
the lane we sit closer  
and the deeper the wind  
the more raucous the brush blowing  
past out windows the closer yet  
until there is just one of us  
and then later with even more  
until there is no one

## Borax

searching for the old  
commercials / unprofessional  
songs not making any sense  
but a memory not letting go  
when all you needed  
was the straight scoop

## Constant Comparative Analysis

Relating data to ideas, then ideas to other ideas.

Substantive codes summarize empirical substance.

Have grab, relevance, and fit.

Sensitizing concepts: Are “accessible” through imagery, humor, irony.

In vivo concepts: concepts inherent to action scene (e.g. milkman’s “coffee stop”).

Coding for anything and everything.

The analyst asks general questions of the data:

“What is this data a study of?” Leads to discovery of the “core variable.” The core variable becomes the focus of the research and theory. The core variable is the variable which accounts for the most variation (e.g. Milkman’s “cultivating relationships”)

## Sharpied Out

responding to swine  
including 8 in New York City  
other travelers called  
the hurricane “panic”  
the speed and scope of free money  
stopped looking at the tip of the iceberg  
another hypothesis is an unwittingly  
dangerous proof

## Foggy Insights

we wonder  
we sing when there is no tune  
the terminology we used is baked like cupcakes  
our ears are partitioned into true and other  
when the snow falling hits the ground snow  
there is a sound and whether you can hear it  
tells you how many days are left  
fewer ahead than behind  
time to write

## Pulverizing

everything about you  
perpetuates my fear of speaking  
you can be the center of an evening  
I am sure you wish for a return  
the Winter certainly provided  
all the darkness in the world  
we live once / why should others  
mess that up?

## Abstractioning

imagining is wrong  
when something real is available  
this lesson so easy in life  
is impossible for those  
addicted to computers



## Walking Away

destiny is not what inevitably awaits  
but the attraction that cannot be turned  
away from / the obsession that focuses  
all attention / something like  
the perfect skirt

## Timelessing

famous when young  
looked up  
to / today they cannot  
be recognized and they scrape  
to eat / to live

## For a Ride

once or twice a story  
opens up that promises  
a performance for a lifetime  
but when the second string character  
get it into her  
head something she suspects  
she send a tight message  
aimed at my head  
the result is a story  
that ends in email  
and a throbbing silence

## Night Mornings On

*wrong embeddings from Anne Michaels*

pull water  
unhook its seam  
we are black smudges  
on the frozen river  
one night we drove to the lakeshore  
past the powerful debris in the harbor  
the small ship of his bones  
sinks in the earth  
on the dock at midnight  
anchored by winter clothes  
we lean back to read the sky  
you turned 22 in the rain  
we walked in rubber boots  
I loved you all day  
each year the forest  
presses our dialogue  
into another ring  
I say nothing  
when people talk of gatherings and plans  
I turn from them  
think what you will  
far away in a boat  
someone wears a red shirt  
a tiny stab in the pale sky  
time presses down and we panic  
become inventive  
dead / he was movement  
shrieking through water  
suddenly out of the element  
that kept him alive  
rain makes its own night  
long mornings  
with the lamps left on

## Some Hopeless Where

dreaming about it  
the dry night air in air  
conditioned hotel rooms  
in what will soon be Winter  
far away and up high  
in the end we  
were both lost  
both losers

## Interminglings Like Before

three weeks longing  
water burning stone  
under the big top  
of stars cows drift  
all day the day  
whispered into  
the sea and sails  
your mouth a hand  
against my mouth  
like stones from stone  
like the sea from a sea

## As Usual

another long day of travel  
sore from sitting too close  
no much sleep the night before  
tired tired tired tired

## Saturation in Models

the story sits there  
and each word along with it  
a crowd of confused inattention  
the story maybe is like a vibrating  
disk at some high but resonant pitch  
and the words white  
specks of sand held in place by attraction  
but the specks are specks  
and the story is just sounds in the wind  
you know what has to cling



## In Florida Humid

if only the copper  
would wait to turn green  
the turquoise would suffer  
less for beauty stress

## Some of Them Know About You

do you think this  
is some sort of sick prank  
like a deer head in the bungalow  
I got him locked up at the station  
I can see the chair where he sat  
it's been hard on both of us  
all the same  
I want to thank you for getting married here  
it just takes time  
my bed under the picture special to you  
the quilt just as I felt it when I left  
my mother looking just like me  
I have a lot of bad memories

## Did You Know About This

stay here  
are you ok  
the stairs into the attic  
the light on a string that still works  
pictures not for anyone to see  
when Dad arrives I've come down  
I need to get going  
he says he's sorry  
for / you fill it in /  
he seemed all sweet  
you should see what he has in the attic

## To Find To Write

sitting in near dark  
keyboard under worn finger pads  
the next word is impossible

## She Is Here More

the color of the sea  
like emeralds in tar  
like feathers on snow  
like ashes on granite  
standing by the shore  
with a storm halfway  
to Nova Scotia  
these thoughts and thoughts  
of never breathing again  
fill me / fill my mind  
fill my lungs / my heart  
is open to overflowing  
her hand by her thighs  
my eyes open to all this  
courage breaking on shore  
up north in Nova Scotia

## Shadow of the Statue

the mysteries of stories  
tempt the mind into figuring  
instead of disappearing  
the mind disappearing  
these are figures we must  
understand in order to live

## Past is Past

the night air being sucked into my bedroom  
by house air being pushed out my mother's  
sometimes the peepers / the night sounds  
from woods not far behind my window  
recently I've thought of time being more flexible  
and the possibility of me going back  
if I could all I would do is watch more carefully  
write things down and ask questions  
why do you think of it only now

## Longing for One More Shot

everything through a pinhole  
the edges a light blue  
in the center a delicate trunk  
still / no person in the shot  
everywhere is too many wheres



## Another Night Stop

lingering on the street  
that leads from the quay  
to the stairs and then your door  
and beyond it to a bed soft and warm  
enough to masquerade as an invitation  
on a night like this / a night with  
night air choking between drizzle and frozen fog  
right now it's past midnight  
very past midnight  
but no thought thought tonight  
will survive till sunrise  
as usual a dim light above the street  
on the second floor invites me to stop  
and watch / watch for the woman  
walking between her stove  
and nightstand hot tea in one hand  
and a sheaf of poems in the other  
lingering / waiting / watching  
for the clue that tells me they're my poems  
that keep her up / because if they're not mine  
nothing in that bed will keep me  
beyond the first rim of dawn

## Heat of Night

the heat puts its hand on my head  
nearby something rotting is covered with flies  
like those days I wrote of so much  
there is a fan blowing in the bedroom  
finally cool air is being pulled in  
the day was spent in languor  
these are the days unlike those past  
when I feel like I've done enough  
to be able to rest and days like today's]  
of laziness feel like they are my due  
what more do you want

May 18, 2009

*web site entry*

**Richard P Gabriel**

to write...

## Secrets But Really One

the steps to a great picture  
are what they always have been  
watch with penetration  
until you can predict what the subject will be like  
then take as many stabs at it as you can  
finally work the chemicals or bits and tricks  
trying one after another on top of even others  
until the story you see is the one  
you wish had happened

## Sounds Wrong

perhaps we live in a time  
when good decisions cannot  
be made / or if it isn't  
possible to listen to the sound  
coming out of a singer's mouth  
maybe it's the church  
at it again

## American Dreamboy

This is the America of road songs:  
asphalt, macadam, concrete, oiled roads,  
dirt roads, gravel roads, roads with high middles  
growing timothy and bermuda grass.  
And lines alongside: telephone, electric, lines  
that hum from calls home or away from home.

This is the America of wandering, of fast  
driving down from passes, along rivers,  
across plains, by surf, through sequoias,  
into towns made light jewels in the dead  
of night, through cities lit sodium orange  
or blue where lights for cleaning crews  
stay up all night, up into mountains, past farms  
as old as angels, to the graveyards of old frontiers.

The song of roads is the song of lines,  
quick verses blank of understanding  
and sympathy, too young to abstract. Let  
me try to find nourishment in these lines,  
along these roads and on these plains; let me  
sit beside these weed-lined avenues of someone else's memories  
where creosote-soaked poles rise up like stylites,  
like crucifixes half-made, like rods grounding hope, like  
monuments no one remembers.

Let me have these roads, then,  
if I can't have you.

## Footnote Haze

a busy girl displays thigh ingenuity  
her hair makes the same statement but  
there are too many footnotes  
the gulls fly by in the LA haze  
buildings behind them and an expert at capturing them  
betrayed she figured out her slightly used skills  
were back in style and she started to sing backwards  
the beach scene didn't work because the muscle men  
were still muscle bound with pounds to go before they lift  
the great hall smoked in the prose version  
but in this one she fought off his rags  
heretical / yes / but she urged us to emulate  
tv went offline / off air / the second story dropped its lines  
at least her highly unusual appetites  
along with our thoughtful sitting vases

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where creosote-soaked poles rise up  
like crucifixes half-made, like rods grounding hope, like  
monuments to surprise.

Let me have these roads,  
let me have the wind whispering soft in the wind-bent wheat  
let me have nothing but these then,  
if I can't have you.



## Cameras Need Mirrors

I've built a machine  
that displays in real time  
the prevalent metaphor  
in any stream of spoken speech  
I held it up to Lost and it displayed lostness  
I held it up to American Idol and it flickered  
between money and young girls  
I held it up to me reading this poem  
and before the very last word  
it flashed boredom  
and then it said  
surprise!!!

## Boring

it takes a lot of effort  
to get ready for a long trip  
I have started getting ready  
for a 10-day trip that includes my wedding  
and have been working to get ready  
for 3 days already with 2 to go  
things take a long time

## Part of a Larger Canvas

a big sculpture of Christ  
after a critical flop  
facing a boy with a pitcher  
it's the perfect symbol  
of Esther fainting before a bag and garlic  
what I mean is  
our universal spirit  
is a critical flop

## Quux Doubts American Dreamboy

now I know that the words  
aren't plain and there is a question  
of what the poem means  
and I need to think  
though I believe I've expressed it all

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sit beside these weed-lined avenues of someone else's memories  
where creosote-soaked poles rise up  
like crucifixes half-made, like rods grounding hope, like  
monuments to yesterday's surprises.

Let me have these roads,  
let me have the wind whispering soft in the wind-bent wheat  
let me have nothing but these then,  
if I can't have you.

## In Tamworth

many things regret changes  
complaints are typical  
here in the north  
a slight fog rises from the river  
minutes after sunset  
clouds catch hold of peaks  
especially bare ones  
places she ate  
burned to the bottoms of their basements  
places she shopped for groceries  
turned to knick-knack stores  
the roads that should be filled to capacity  
on days like this at times like this  
are empty / the signs that say  
Brake for Moose  
might as well say  
Accelerate for Pandas  
it's a bit lonely up here

## Staining Days

staining the south face  
of the Tamworth house  
so it might last a bit longer  
reminds me of the many stainings  
from the past / from former days  
of staining houses and more  
I remember photos I can't find  
but sometimes I find other copies  
funny the vanilla fudge of history

## City Strangers

outside the hotel  
the cold morning sun  
is fixing to rise  
someone is sleeping in my bed  
facing away from the window  
which also faces away from the sun  
out this way windows and building fronts  
grow pink as night and all it held  
weakens and departs  
later when we are both awake  
we'll walk to the center of town  
and buy something special to her  
so she can make something special to me



## **What An Idiot**

my fear of making a decision  
has ruined my mother's house in NH  
I am too depressed to write tonight

## Still An Idiot

some find it easy  
to slough off huge  
errors / not me  
you would think I'd be happy  
tonight but the memory of  
how I failed my mother  
cannot easily be shaken  
maybe tomorrow

## Marriage Tomorrow

the light falls funny  
on the white steeple  
not too long before sunset  
maybe 3 hours off  
the paint is gloss  
and undelineated highlights  
are all there are  
tomorrow I become different  
legally but not otherwise  
nothing will change but finances  
and the existential nature  
of the promise

## After a Long Wait

by the river  
not many insects  
the grass nicely mowed  
and the sky just a little  
clouded over but  
not thickly  
in a simple ceremony we wed  
nothing spectacular in the words  
but simple ones without controversial meanings  
it was short and our promises did linger over details  
but big strokes that can mean only much  
welcome to our family

## Wrong Statically

finding the man  
though he be merely a remnant  
unanimated and retiring  
proved the adage about looking  
on the wrong side of the river  
and that the market is not efficient

## **Wishes**

will you fly with me  
will you help me withstand  
the mistakes as time floods  
past me / will you remain  
as I remember you from the first day

## Accident

the bible makes us lust for superiority  
that we among few know the secret  
we move to spread this secret far & farther  
but it's cocooned in words and thoughts that keep its spread narrow  
those who don't believe are spit upon  
or worse / such as bullets to the heart  
once I found a road with a natural cross  
at its side and stopped to find  
the blood of Christ  
instead a twisted fender and hubcap  
along with a cross covered with tinsel flowers told me  
here was yet another fatal one

## Unassumed

who among is able to find truth  
beyond words  
no matter the stories  
the conclusions based on intemperance persist  
the path to faith is like a Tarantino  
flick



## Fried Proverbs

explosion at meat plant  
broils hundreds of steaks  
and turns pigs into pickled pigs' feet  
train wreck by Water Street  
turns hoboes into job seekers  
price of gas forces fat fathers  
to buy more beans  
my stove with 40,000 btus  
has no match

## Blanketed In Thought

the nights lasted longer  
we spent all day in bed too  
the shades pulled to remind us of lust  
outside all I knew was that it was not home  
nothing familiar in theory  
all territory was there for discovery  
pulling back the blinds midday  
enough to see the clouds milking  
red from bricks I felt about  
to really fall asleep just  
as I deserved to

## Tomorrow

jerk  
I'm awake  
probably from a noise I made  
only the slimmest slice of light  
comes through the pulled curtains  
I am not home  
my memory struggles to name the city  
then  
the breathing next to me  
I sit up and turn toward it  
the hair is unfamiliar  
wrong color / too light  
the curves too deep  
who is she  
her arm moves toward me  
her hand pulls me back to sleep

## View (in sound) From a Room

a shallow grade  
my transition from sleep to awake  
I heard water  
indistinct as if mixed with wind  
where was I  
just as little light came in from the window  
I was in a hotel  
in a foreign city  
in the north  
north in Europe / it was autumn  
then a gust and sharp tapping  
rain in a heavy wind beating  
at the window  
the light like a lantern behind gauze  
then my sense of sound direction  
switch on / the shower was running  
I saw I was on the side of the bed near the window  
the side was still warm  
and a little damp  
a book in another language  
on the bedside table  
clothes I didn't know hanging on a chair  
I remembered a rounded warmth in the night  
those times I woke  
times the sky was still filled with stars  
last night something happened  
or something changed

## All This Knowing

it's possible to know everything  
but for now / in these lives we spend  
only the tips of everything show  
we know only one way to paint in the gaps  
it's not through poems really  
but something like them  
only longer  
and maybe different

## In a Jealous Sky

some songs  
some parts of them  
are written to remind us  
that there are loves we cannot  
return / that unlike the upbeat  
songs that accompany bright new weddings  
these songs beat melancholically with downward moving chords  
these songs are what you hear when a woman  
whose heart once beat like those perky songs  
is walking instead away from a once hopeful meeting  
into the disappearing mist and fog of a bit warm but biting snowfall  
down a street much improved by the offwhite unfrenetic storm

## Appendage

she browsed through the brushes  
then selected an ink  
paper was tough in this crafts shop  
we would be able to try only a few dozen strokes  
she tried 40 and I did 2  
we chose then she hopped the train for home

## They Said It Couldn't Be Done

they say the Irish girls  
won't strip and in my estimation  
tis true / they leave that task  
to their slutty sisters in England  
never expect them to strip off  
in mixed company or even just  
the girls / no one  
not even Mother Teresa  
was more covered



## Ire For A Reason

too friendly  
too rude  
but the pattern soon clears  
tell what's important for tourism  
object to everything else  
makes for a prickly pickle  
of daunting stew

## Winding Stair

fragile flighty toothy  
pale red dainty laughy  
spastic hairpinned  
blueeyed bugeyed  
she blanched when her date  
offered Quux his cell to surf on

## Aftermath

when a great friendship ends  
the sparks always dim quickly  
even with winds funneled into short  
offshot streets / I am reminded of the passage  
of women and temporaries through a scared life  
tonight instead of hope I hold a profound fatigue

## My Father Could

tie knots  
sing and drum at the same time  
solder copper pipe  
look at me and not laugh  
said he could run between raindrops and not get wet  
catch / purge / kill / clean / cook / eat a possum  
with sweet potatoes  
jury rig anything  
dig tunnels hundreds of feet underground  
in confined conditions  
the kind of hard labor my generation  
didn't have to do

## And I Can't

## Short Words

no one worries  
the struggle is always alone  
sleep teaches us the final rest is serene  
don't worry about the religion of it  
just work aka struggle

## Rare Pops

my thought processes never reach  
a valid conclusion / my thinking is too  
shallow and what I understood has been long  
forgotten / I am increasing the pile  
that no one can be proud of  
line by line you can see  
the e's piling up because  
nothing rare pops out of  
this mind

## Bad Stuff

I need to do something again  
by body has exploded  
I cannot look at myself  
I cannot think I am worth anything

## Note From My Mother

near misses don't make quiet afternoons  
there is a certain hush to the evenings  
I can almost hear the cows in the barn  
wish the card game would start  
the moonshine would be dug up and poured



## Like Now

what do you do when all you have is  
when they rebuilt the house  
it was not the way it was before  
which we loved but something different  
something ugly that we hated  
you find a photo taken by a neighbor the year  
before the first house burned down  
and photoshop that corner enough  
so you can see what that old place could have looked like  
almost as if the information waves  
(or are they particles)  
still splash against some edge and can bound  
back to you  
at times

## To The Barn / From the Barn

out the door  
across the yard and road  
over the stonewall and along it to the old apple tree  
around it on the stonewall  
along the dungish stream  
a jump over it  
through the hayed over stretch  
and up to the old foundation filled with debris  
from a generation of life  
past the big lilac a poet must have found musty in fragrance  
down to the driveway and to the barn door  
slide it open and then a climb up into the hayloft  
where hay dust fills the nose and the eyes  
shafted by light pouring through the gaps in the walls  
50 years ago and now all I have is this small plot  
across the world away and the words that attract  
strangers to me like that barn

## Poets Be Gone

out of here you  
overbleached poets  
enough of your  
sparrows and finches things  
and the damned ancient lilac  
poetry is better than this  
better than you

## Fathers Ago

he works the fields  
behind him the trees have never been  
more fluffy with green  
I believe I'd fear him  
my mission is to remake his story  
into one for me

## Sci Fi Bodice Ripper

a milled hand approaches the nape  
of a milk white neck in the diminished  
light twilight brings to the nearly fogged in cottage  
at the shore of a romantic encounter  
is it possible this hand might dissolve  
into a nervous sense of reluctant touch  
as befits the brush of metal on skin

## Souled Out

why should the skies clear  
the fog burn off and the coffee brew  
as if the hot water meant something to it  
and to the water / speaking of water  
what makes it special in all three forms  
when none of the rest of us really  
reach special in any of our phases  
these are things that matter to writers  
small of mind and timid of soul

## Gold Fields

in the night  
her mouth softens  
as she stops readying for speech  
there is little light  
there are not many lights  
there is only one light  
outside and belonging to someone else  
someone nearby  
she watches me  
as I stop my readiness  
this is the moment  
everything is made of

## Vaudeville of Pretending

they all see it  
as a towering strength  
no one realizes  
that it's just a show  
that's all there is



## Wings Remade

trying to figure it out  
the next great idea  
waiting so far out into the wings  
that it's in someone else's wings  
naturally I too dislike the ideas  
that ooze out of this head  
I dreamt for instance  
of the house unmade and remade  
filling my dreams like Lab-enhanced photos

## Synecdoche

as I write this  
I write this  
I wonder why  
as I wonder why  
this sentence no verb

## Like Gabriel

I bring you a light  
it says illumination  
it says what is lit is possible  
I bring you the light  
only the light

## Where It First Happened

when you see the land like this  
when it's a place you could wander  
for hours when there's nothing else to do  
when the different seasons play against it  
in the way a lead guitarist will play against  
the melody when the singer sings  
when there are hardwoods pines leafy paths  
needled beds mighty rocks strewn about  
buildings older than you can imagine  
until research dozens of years later reveals  
them as potentially precious  
when there are ponds that can freeze over  
large enough for a plausible hockey game  
a stream that in spring can make a fine small torrent  
when there are apples pears grapes blueberries enough  
to survive on / then you're talking a real piece of land  
something worth spending some time to remember

## Sanctuary

the road skirts a pond  
one side with a large mown field  
is filled with geese  
across the road and a little higher up  
there's a swamp

down the road the road  
passes by the birthplace  
of a minor poet from 200 years  
past who moved not very far  
taught near my farm  
and is buried across the street  
from where my grandfather died

this road once had a trolley  
to my small town from the larger  
one to the west  
every now and then the frost  
shows its rails to us

## After a Day

sitting down  
producing  
talking to no good purpose  
a day of rest  
a day of work  
the music doesn't stop

## Northern Exposure

sleepiness still in my eyes  
cold air in the late afternoon  
autumn in the north of Europe  
I walk with her down streets  
darkened by clouds and a sun  
about to go missing  
she let's her skirt hit her boots  
from behind it's a series of little kicks  
this is when the parallel universe  
is supposed to kick in and let me play  
this one out to the end  
instead the expensive little café  
the only one open for us late Sunday

## Why Always the Last Minute

not much time left  
to tweak the schedules  
hack hack hack  
but it's the complexity



## Short and Strong

Nugent called in to the show  
from his home in Michigan  
and told Palin that he was firing  
up the grill to cook up  
Alaskan black bear backstrap  
in her honor / the governor said  
that was "awesome" / Nugent encouraged Palin  
to stay strong and fight the forces against her

Palin announced Friday she is resigning

## In Pain Language

between the house and garage  
he lay curled over  
stabbing pain in his gut and groin  
through the night he feels the need to piss  
but nothing happens  
he can hardly stand  
the dew rises to a low fog  
behind the house and down the long hill  
the pond gives up its bullfrog bellows  
crickets well up and sometimes die out  
near the ground the air's cool but just above  
it's still warm and cloying  
his cows chew and moo in the dark  
chicken in their coops cluck restlessly with every  
nearby sound / no one comes out to him  
car horns blurt soft in the distance  
the train comes then later leaves  
this will kill him / one of these things will  
still he can't move / do they think it pretending  
he lays his head to the grass / its smell of finality  
he cries / cries out / his groin cries from the pain  
he cannot piss / his thoughts flee from one language  
to another and then into the language of no language

## Someone's Version

someone took him to the hospital  
the doctors looked inside  
the infection was too much  
though made of nothing but the littlest things  
alive they were out to kill  
how could this be

I heard a story about his speech  
to my mother  
how she was too good  
too trusting  
that people would take advantage

the heat didn't let go  
only fans did their work in the small room  
in the small hospital  
in the town where he perhaps  
worked next to the town  
where he worked the farm

people have told me  
his temper was sharp  
his wife's was too  
my mother's too

he died of the fever  
in chaos  
his mind not by his side  
my mother  
just 21  
stood there  
later she stood by his coffin in the living room  
stood by the grave  
watched them lower him in  
drove to the farm  
drove home

## Jazz of Random Information Spotting

in the old picture  
if you look at the right spot  
in the background  
you can see the style  
of house that burned down  
twostory but with a peaked roof  
cedar shakes on the sides  
though in b&w it's clearly redbrown  
all I needed to know  
was that it was different  
from what replaced it  
and just enough to make up  
a description that would take up  
4 or 5 pages in a book on people  
I hardly knew

## Physics Doesn't Play

why does the hardware  
always fail  
some would say the software  
does or should first  
but hardware likes to tease  
physics / physics always  
bites back / never plays

## Near Wichita, But Only as a Place

wind whips papers and bags  
a can rolls then topples down the street  
coming to rest in the crook of the curb  
in the past the bags and cans  
would be paper / steel  
now they are plastic / aluminum  
so thin the crow eyeing it could crush  
it were it to step onto its sleek side  
the wind through the overhead  
wires makes a crying sound  
or a sound like soft singing  
anyone standing here watching  
it would be sweating from the forehead  
because it's the interplay of heat wet and thought  
that makes this scene exhausting

## Anti Ars

no great bucket of diction  
or contrived phrasings  
neither an interest in greek themes  
or mythologies / at least not  
those same old ones /instead  
perhaps the strangely large words  
Hopi use where two of them  
make up a poem

## Liffey

when I was about to get there  
she was leaning on the railing  
above the river that runs  
through the middle of the city  
her hair in this light was just  
this much red / in the breeze  
it seemed to melt into a mist  
when a burp from physics' gut  
erupted and the air shifted  
I had hoped anticipation  
would enliven her face as funny stories  
in the pub always did but in her face  
she was straight as stone and eyes  
on the slow sludgy water below  
she didn't see me coming  
I think though the bridge I crossed  
was just downstream but the traffic  
and concrete railing surely interposed  
or she did and that was why

I crossed myself  
crossed the street  
and scooted down an alley  
away from the river  
and what gripped her  
back to the books  
where sadness is a turn of phrase



## 1/125 @ f11

the labeled swan  
ingeniously sat motionless  
while his harem schwaremed  
behind him / behind me  
someone thanked him and he  
moved his bill from statue forward  
to staring at me / nothing else  
moved but the fish which apparently  
leapt a little to snag a bag  
jesus christing across the pond  
still except for all its life

## Cold Hard Steal

the surgeon selects the right one  
begins silently slice  
on one side your exposed abdomen  
on the other your cash  
and later your tears of joy  
and even later your tears

## Science

the hills are alive  
with the sound of music  
sitting in a circle  
what would be suspect  
could make this true

## How Like Us

an army of angels  
propel themselves  
through the mechanism  
of indecision  
considered through the lens of reason  
they are as if programmed  
with loose details and intentional fudge  
you thought they could see all  
instead they see a lot  
and do it quickly  
but they are ruled by time like us

## Technology Can't Help No How

many parts of a life  
are just a litter  
pile up on the side  
if we looked at one  
through the lens of a digital photography editing package  
we'd be tempted to amp up the colors  
and oversharpen the details  
but the dodge and burn tools  
the erasers and cloners and maskers  
would be greyed out

## Like Many Days Except

where my school sits  
a factory once sat  
and for recess we'd race through  
the raised gaps between its foundations  
we'd wonder what it had been  
the concrete now chunking off  
with wood bits rotting away  
the town once all factories  
now torn down and homes  
line the streets / the rail line  
gone / the meaning of the town  
long past like the streams that urge  
their view of the past on the fishing boys  
worn out from biking over to one side  
of town from the other on this hot day

## How O How?

no matter how I picture him  
in a field / shaping metal  
his departure escapes my imagination  
yet what makes up me  
made him up in part  
money for a train  
an unwalkable walk  
boat maybe  
money enough for a berth on a ship  
through the Baltic to England  
was it a business deal / too much work for escape  
bravery cannot be part of it  
hard work is the only thing that could have happened  
or did he meet her there  
and her money got them here

## Rule-Breaking Contrast / Unprintable Colors

fallow fields are filled with poets who would paint  
 with words this valley in the expensive colors  
 of a gallery painter's palette  
 such noticing should go un-...  
 I tried the smells and used them  
 like razors to cut away the stillness  
 suture up for you only the lean  
 memories / the ones packed away quick  
 in unfinished boxes / like this...  
*tarweed smells / like souls bound*  
*for heaven on the train that stops*  
*where the mournful gather / gum trees*  
*drop their lozenges as if an extra*  
*(my God an extra / just one extra)*  
*breath could be taken*  
*but the portion is determined*  
 ...this way is nothing but deletions  
 I heard a woman tell me once  
 all smells blow down this valley  
 here in St Helena the light is too much light  
 the contrast that makes us see is the harsh cut  
 from one unrememberable color to its opposite  
 what some see as delightful small bites  
 on the way to a bounding evening  
 is what we say to fall asleep  
 what matters is out of gamut  
 after all this the small yelps erupt  
 telling more than what they interrupt  
 the poem I want to say starts like this  
 the story that's hidden by walnuts and figures

suddenly awake / nothing but dark / silence  
 cries from the room where women wait  
 crying / *wake up wake up*  
 I am suddenly awake / *it's not fair*  
*wake up <pause> <I hear something> <and pause some more> just one more time*  
 he matters to them / they matter to me  
 but his half stare widened  
 breathing damped  
 only one breath was left  
 then that one was gone

things like this / in rooms made but not finished by us  
 happen at night in valleys that are but never seem to be  
 too bright



## Chime with Brash Urgency

The Geyser is a loading tube  
 for the now famous Coke geyser  
 powered by MENTOS®, and if you've ever tried  
 doing the experiment, you know how difficult  
 it is in structural engineering to resist lateral loads  
 so a building is designed to act like a tube,  
 hence the name *tubing*—for the conveyance of fluids—implies  
 tight engineering requirements while a tube is a device  
 used to amplify, switch, modify, or create  
 an electrical signal by controlling the movement of electrons  
 in a low-pressure space as distinct from the hard vacuum type  
 which has internal gas pressure reduced  
 outside the U.S. where Go-Gurt is sold  
 as Yoplait Tubes and Frubes as opposed to Fizzix,  
 a carbonated yogurt snack, a “sparkling yogurt”  
 developed by Lynn Ogden of Utah,  
 to resemble a cylinder, one of the most basic curvilinear shapes,  
 its surface formed by points at a fixed distance  
 from a given straight line, the axis that started  
 as a collection of high school friends named  
 Fee Waybill, “Sputnik” Spooner, Prairie Prince, and Re Styles,  
 with Waybill assuming the persona of “Quay Lewd”  
 decked out with flashing glasses and impossibly  
 beautiful looking and beautiful sounding 5Y3G tubes  
 with the “ST” or “Coke Bottle” shape, so difficult to find  
 if you've never tubed before, so head for the Town Tinker  
 Tube headquarters on Bridge St.,  
 where expertly trained staff will rent you the tubes  
 and give you instructions for transporting objects  
 using the basic principles of pneumatics  
 as stated by the Greek Hero of Alexandria  
 so you can enjoy all the ammonia aromas  
 of fecal decomposition for the rest of the climb with your Poop Tube  
 in your haul bag or clipped with a ‘biner  
 to the view from the meadow where  
 the face seems a pure place and pristine but actually  
 it compares in aroma  
 with the New York City subway.

Tubes sweet as the oranges that once grew  
 in the pre-mall Southern California sun.  
 So hurry!

## On The Plus Side

*From an Unprotected Fairy Tale Blog*

...thanks for posting this / can you imagine the ultrasound...

...makes me wonder what those trolls packed (toothbrush deodorant calf's head . . . )...

...±M çì €£ °Ê "£ "]" ©w ©ñ 'Ú;Chttp://post-post.org/national ...

...was she truly ugly or just not as beautiful as her sister...

...I like she ate them both...

...maybe the shock from the goat and the spoon just threw everyone off...

...simply fools your brain into believing...

...thing I love #3: talking baby...

...every man should know this at all costjss...

...anyone who knows fairy tales can hear the alarm bell  
don't disobey the wise woman!  
thing is: the queen's right...

...option of making your own electricity...

...Tatterhood kicks troll-butt  
losing one's head isn't fatal  
and she tells off the grown-ups...

...she will call you a maniac...

...thing I love #8: "Not unless my sister marries too"...

...Jasper Cavanaugh (lovelyladiesss) is now following you on Twitter...

...on the plus side / at least she does the magical transformation herself...

...was the goat even consulted?  
I think not...

## Sonnet 1110100

To the marriage of genuine brains I will not permit  
the approval of obstacles. Where removal medicine roils,  
love removes change, bends with the ferryman  
to extract the unnecessary. Uh, uh: love is the rainstorm's  
fixed signal, the one in no agitated circumstance;  
it is the star with the barking voice, the rind  
that roams approximately about actual worth,  
love is not an idiot but a sickle that folds its mordant edge  
to the limits of cheeks and lips rose-colored inside;  
love is not a summary of one dumb week,  
but supports the one at the edge of destination.  
If this be mistake and on me be proved,  
I'll not love with judicial action  
nor will any person initiate authorization.

## The Saddle of the Day

in the days of no pay and 10¢ gas  
the fields waited in the dew-wet mornings for the plow  
for the scythe the rake and wagon  
the cows waited in the cool dewed mornings for the milking  
for the feed the opened door and grazing grass  
the chickens waited in the self-warmed coops for the hands underneath  
for the feed the unshut passages and sunwarmed bugs  
the girl my mother waited in her lumped moist bed for the presunrise sounds  
for the farmy breakfast the invitation to work and the saddle of the day  
splayed like a hog butchered to its back awaiting final cuts and icing down  
waiting with spite and remorse watching through weather stained windows the farm turn on turn out  
the stations of the farm devotions the stall the slop and coop  
the sacrificial trees and bush of apples pears and berries  
the vines the hills and stake-tied plants of grape and squash and peas  
pumping water from hand-dug wells filling tubs and buckets  
for horses hogs and chickens geese and cows and ducks  
water cooled in soil and sand in underlakes to burst in ponds and basements  
logging trees for repairs and heat packing coal in bins  
sending logs to sawyers and mills for planks and boards for braces and dowels  
the loaders the side-deliveries the hay-rakes the mowers the pitchforks  
the crow bars the wheelbarrows the wagons the hitches the harnesses the feedbins the haybarn  
the smoothed neck posts the milkcans the creamcans the pickling jars the mason jars  
the spades and shovels the barbed wire the electric fences to teach the cows  
cooking on the coal range and the smell of it against scythed hay  
picking fruit picking tomatoes picking corn picking peas picking squash picking cucumbers  
digging potatoes digging carrots digging onions digging garlic  
shucking peeling slicing butchering mixing frying broiling boiling baking steaming  
washing rinsing whitewashing painting scrubbing scouring swabbing sweeping folding making  
working the plow spreading the manure harrowing it in planting mowing drying baling stacking  
feeding cows feeding pigs feeding chicken geese and all that all that  
passing time by radio and borrowed books  
passing time by trips to the bridge its river and shaded lanes  
passing time in old-country language the stories of travel and hints of love's messages  
no time for dating and courting kissing and holding walking down dustpacked roads and phonecalls at night  
no time for friends and girlfriends and townfriends no restaurants no snack bars no icecream stands  
she remembered those days the night of the storm  
remembered her mother too fat to help remembered her father killed by that mother  
farmers and neighbors in on the secret  
police chief drinking down his payoff cache  
remembered all this just this on that night that night of the storm

## The Girl My Mother

hauling woven baskets filled with pears filled with apples bringing grapes  
from the storebin to the coops to the chickens to the geese to the hogs  
in an unshaped dress over pants gloves flannel coat  
too poor for glasses too hungry to daydream too tired to wonder  
cows call low but never stop always eat never wander too far  
she opens the door removes her boots and scarf her gloves and hat  
sits to a green plate of fried kielbasa rough bread and boiled cabbage  
coal fumes spice her meal the great chef of the Ukraine has made it  
for her daughter's strength to keep them alive and drink  
is all that's left what's left of it and later the neighbors will provide  
but for now it's the girl my mother

## Dating Advice for Certain People

whenever you date for the first time  
choose a beautiful locale for the first touch  
get her to look at the scene and pretend  
if you need to  
to be overwhelmed by the scene  
tell her it reminds you of a sad thing  
you can't talk about  
yet around sunset is a good time  
then touch her  
pretend you are not aware of the move  
that observation deck up on Victoria Peak in Hong Kong is a god spot  
take her there then implement the plan I've just described  
it should work especially if you don't live in Asia

## Abracadabra

tonight in Santa Fe  
after the 3 minutes of light so magical anything can happen  
is over then is when you can see the young women bouncing  
down the streets but only the small ones  
small streets I mean just tonight one woman  
looked like she had feathered legs and bounced down the street  
her blond hair was everywhere and it turned out  
when she got under a streetlight that her legs were bare  
this is that happens here  
after that 3 minutes

## Carry Me Slowly Carry Me Gently

he cradled me  
as a child would be  
or an infant  
so my transition from the table to the floor might be eased  
one arm under my neck  
one under my knees  
he rotated me up from flat to vertical  
I had expected it to happen once more  
to be lifted this way after I was a child  
this wasn't the occasion I expected



## Crossed Mine

on a firepit near the oversized oak  
coals smoulder and low slung chairs  
bear up well / sitting beside each other  
the two watch the coals express their final emanations  
the night is not too old but the question  
could arise where will they sleep tonight  
does this question cross either of their minds  
it crossed mine but I have something at stake  
smoke if you can call it that entangles us three  
and I wonder sometimes what oaks like this one  
would think if there were a set of dimensions  
of the physical world where poetic ideas operated  
and whether specifically there would be a place  
for me in a two

## Listen Up Quick

I'm the prophet of the future of institutionalized love  
the caretaker of the monetization of incremental favoritism  
I've reckoned the depth of illegal manifestations of despair  
hear my words as I speak them quickly with only 5 steps  
to go to the top of the gallows

## Geometry and Reason

from her hips down  
movements are elliptical  
even her skirt rings like a hula  
I suppose viewed differently  
or in different clothing  
this stopping would not be sensible  
but hearts were never taught what if

## Over Again

sun's made up it's mind today  
to rise as if as usual  
tonight though it will dip away  
to think it over again

## Sunport

in the airport lounge the gorgeous family  
with a beautiful mother and 3 beautiful girls  
and an ok father tried to board the wrong  
plane though the gate was clear  
and the man whose name was called 8 times  
never heard them even though he was just over there  
well actually in the bar over there  
the sky became beautiful and I didn't hear  
anyone call my name  
probably because no one did

## Sanuk For You

for once the sun set he found the pain  
undiminished and his optimism  
built after his walk out of Russia to the Black Sea  
and then a ship ride to the States and a successful farm  
with a formerly rich wife failing  
along with the light and warmth  
he couldn't stand / more than that was wrong  
he would have wondered why / was wondering why  
his way but instead it was the animals he worried about  
the key to survival though in this case so silly  
his wife was still screaming at him from the kitchen  
mixed with the sounds of vomit and running water  
he heard singing too / his mother her low voice  
from the barn stalls home in the old country  
he had come so far to end so low

## Sanuk Knowledge

sun about to rise but he could not  
he lay where he was put down  
the heat was coming up again  
the cows made their complaints  
why didn't Helen answer them / him  
was she even home / he couldn't remember  
his head hurt from the aftermath of the blow and drink  
his wife snored heavily her snores just offset  
from their echoes between the house and garage  
the fancy car / he couldn't drive it now / maybe  
never again / he knew how this would end  
the pain was a ragged shard / the kind that killed  
the pain of walking would never overtake him again  
nothing would / he knew when the animal  
would never rise again

## Sanuk Early Day

the sun went up about halfway to the top  
the heat came back and bugs from the ground  
walked into his clothes and mosquitoes from his wet  
farm hovered over him landing when his attention dropped  
the cows were out in the fields and woods  
was Helen home / did Alexandra let them out  
Billy came and stared saying Pawli will you ever stand again  
Sam called to him come home / Ann called for lunch  
flies liked his smell and his head hurt  
he still couldn't pee / pain was all about  
pain was always what it was about



## Sanuk Trip

she put her arms under his and lifted  
Sam helped too / they got him into his convertible  
she drove him to Amesbury / a little closer than Haverhill  
he kept his eyes closed the whole trip  
the bouncing kicking him again and again  
down Hadley to Highland to Main to the Highland in Amesbury  
and the 2-story hospital / the heat was relieved only by a fan  
and they planned a surgery to look for what was wrong  
the story being of a horse accident and the tongue  
of a wagon / when they heard this and saw the man  
even then they wondered at the story

## Sanuk Operation

when they were inside  
they knew they hadn't the tools to fix him  
and with ether as the only tool of making it painfree  
he knew everything they knew  
because he heard them talking  
coming all this way  
and then she did this  
the little pipsqueak  
but he didn't have that word / instead a Russian one  
and she wasn't little outweighing him by  
oh how much a lot  
he was about to sleep and he sensed it  
time to cry later

## Sanuk Early Morning

he looked out the window  
it was open and the screen was a dark shade over the bright sun  
riding on the waving leaves of the oak outside  
the smell of the heat that blew in had a hard core  
in the center of a burst of just-cut hay  
the river was not far he knew  
and though he was patched up the end was a day or two away  
the bright sun was just an early morning sun  
and in a few hours she would come  
the girl my mother to hear the sentence  
from the man who did the cutting and examining  
were the cows taken care of the pigs the chickens the horses  
even the one he knew they blamed / it was the story  
she told him on the drive / the two drives into the gut and groin  
a week apart to account for the damage  
what good would come of his wife in jail  
when the animals and fields needed their tending to

## Sanuk Telling

later she came the girl my mother  
and after he sat there for 30 minutes  
with her just looking out the window  
and feeling the cool wind turn warm  
he began the story as the doctors told him  
but he needed not bother / the 30 minutes  
told all / a bit back she had sat down  
in the hard chair and now she moved  
to the corner of the bed where the light and shadow  
divided his face / soon she knew and would never tell

## Sanuk Rules

that done he sat silent once more  
and she could see his thoughts transforming  
from Russian to English / birds of course  
chimed in and a nurse looked in asking  
about water but he knew that would not work  
and after a bit after about 30 more minutes he spoke  
told her everything she would need to know  
for the rest of her life / he thought it was small advice  
but she embraced it fully and it informed her every  
day until the night she died during the big storm  
even still it didn't start to inform until he was gone

## Sanuk Gone

next morning she returned and learned  
hospitals preferred face to face not the phone  
when she turned into the door and saw  
his clothes in a pile on the chair and no  
one in the bed / perhaps the doctor came in and told her  
but all she remembers is her hands the soft  
way a woman will / folding his clothes  
smoothing them out / placing them  
slowly into the cardboard suitcase  
that sat on the floor all the last few days  
walking down the hall down the stairs  
out the door to the convertible  
thinking about not what happened  
but what would happen when it's two women  
who hate each other / a 100-acre farm  
and 60 hours of factory work a week  
then there were no thoughts  
and they didn't return for years

## Sanuk Visiting Hours

at the house some or many came  
to visit one last time / the food was cooked  
oldcountrystyle / by relatives some friends  
even still the animals needed what they needed  
and did not wait to see what followed on  
the heat never rose / her mother was able  
not to drink the night before / they had not much  
good to think of her / the girl my mother though  
they knew what she would need to do  
the man in the plain box could not help her more  
outside there were noises / simple ones  
for her soon the only ones

## Sanuk Burying

a hearse pulled up and his oldcountry friends  
lifted him from the parlor down the stairs  
into its bed / in the barn the girl my mother  
was finishing feeding early / she  
followed in the convertible taking the shortcut  
through Newton over to Winnekenni then past  
Lake Saltonstall and into Linwood / to the new part  
just half filled with low stones many from oldcountries  
out in the sun / a priest spoke in Russian  
the chanter echoed and swung the incense  
a dozen men and 8 women stood for an hour  
his wife cried (I think) / the girl my mother  
looked up at a hill behind them in the cemetery  
with only a few bigger stones and thought there  
when it was over they all left but her  
she watched the 2-man crew lower him  
lower the lid fill in the hole / she walked up the hill  
where a small beech was just starting to rise  
she sat nearby and watched down the hill the work finish  
then much later the sun set / the river smell came up  
cars made rude noises / here she thought  
one day here



## Sanuk Left Behind

the drive home was in twilight  
she drove slow past the new grave  
the headstone would come later  
when there was some money  
maybe from insurance or the workers'  
group he belonged to from the oldcountry  
where they knew what exploitation was  
the air was cooling as it always would summers  
throughout her life / dreams now would be  
only through the night / but she stopped  
at the icecream stand and got a large maple walnut  
sat on a rough bench watched autoists drive past  
some coming from the beach others toward it  
everything felt back and forth to her  
her bed in the room waited for her to come sleep soon  
when she would sleep next would a long time  
away but she knew where / it would be where  
she could see  
him

## Sanuk Story

the story's too good to ignore  
but I know no details  
I need to imagine them  
and to imagine I need to write them  
and to write them is to make something  
real only in the most fictive sense  
this is the single path to a conclusion

## A Night Too Far

too many nights end like this  
the sad song playing in the dark  
the tubes glowing pushing the music  
into the speaker cones  
the words to match spuming onto the page  
later sleep will powder it over  
no one will be better off

## First Cause

according to decency  
several people would be willing  
to forsake their wills  
and walk like never before  
to the gates of bad neighborhoods  
where they will as one  
turn their backs on the rich

## In a Country You Can't Guess

in the extreme old place  
now modern layered upon it  
my flat is above the old street  
I am in a modern layer  
below it's extreme old  
it's not near where I've lived or grew up  
it's planned to be an escape  
a place where no one can impose  
if you saw a picture of it you would never  
guess even what hemisphere it was in  
even what hemisphere I am in

## Not My Thing

my level of gap is asymmetric  
for example a manuscript plan  
or business or development leaders  
decomposition is people people formally  
identified as gaps / a manifestation  
might manifest itself as a subset  
of felt effects / affectations  
this reminds me of eyelashes and buttered hair

## Day O Day

day of speeches  
the light on the Bay though blue  
reflects green and gray  
the effects are like cold unwelcome  
no one was prepared for my outburst  
of key bluster / I was hoping it'd  
go better

## **Other Half**

in the palm of a mind  
the tethered thoughts wrap  
around the figurative trunk  
like a metaphor's real half



## Business As It Is

spelling the habits are obsessions  
doing the job so well  
the habits are riffed  
join the dole line  
pass joints on corners  
leer at pretty practices  
the obsessions file bankruptcy  
and every floated boat sinks

## Pick a Winner

could you be a hoarder  
hiding like the things in your clutches  
things hang from hooks on your walls  
your ceilings are invisible behind what lingers there  
your head touches the drippings above  
because the floor is nowhere seeable  
one day soon the door won't open  
which side will you be on

## Over the River

the river's foam forms strange attractor  
shapes in the backflow from the sidestream  
of a speedy downstream current  
from the footbridge built by entrepreneurs  
decades ago when the town was neatly industrialized  
to render trees into wealth and toxins  
that beauty forms from leeching  
such from the normal shows in the tanned  
tinge in the river / I wish to depart

## Long Ku

across the pond  
on a flat rock sticking  
up out of it  
the loon preens  
the sun behind him  
he has fished all afternoon  
and is full of fish  
his feathers shine bright  
above the water

## Alongside a Railway

near us the grass just mowed  
made the air smell of home  
to me / and above that is the salt  
of flats at low tide  
there might be a way to photograph this  
but I can't figure the stops  
I am fiddling  
the scene fidgets

## Unknown Flying Humanoids

the balloon sequences are persuasive  
unknown creatures and living beings  
would find this an ideal location to survive  
no DNA was found  
it appears to be a work of art  
and no something once alive  
the artist?

## Giving Up

tired of things not working  
just plain tired

## The Same

everything was the same  
as the last day I was in the house  
aside from the deterioration  
from total neglect  
same carpet same wallpaper  
same linoleum same tiles  
black mold everywhere  
rot and water damage  
insect damage  
overgrown grounds  
but everything else the same  
exactly the same  
after 40 years



## Another Morning

the sounds of confusion  
reign / loud phone rings  
talking/shouting loud music  
things knocking around too loud  
to figure how to describe  
another morning at the house  
food being prepared nonstop  
papers shuffling doors slamming  
the walls coming down  
another morning

## Snow Walk Across the Carpathians

he was on a horse back  
it was snowing  
and he was go ahead slow  
and we was walking behind  
well we walked maybe  
mile that way  
then he said  
now he said  
walk this way  
and  
and he was disappear  
and we walk and it was snow  
and snow was stop afterwards  
and we holler for him  
and so forth and so on  
no and we walk night and we saw the light  
until we walk on that light  
and then he come in and say  
you did pretty good  
because he did not want to get caught  
see  
he did not want go with us  
so he was way way out from us  
like he was watch  
was watching us  
and so we come in there

## A Curve Fit

sometimes  
even a powerful tool  
equipped with too few  
smoothes the roughest of gestures

## As Liked

did Shakespeare  
have surrealism  
if he saw his plays mangled  
by anacronistic absurdity  
it would be surrealism  
to him / would he recognize  
it as a form of art  
when I make curtsy  
bid me farewell

## Replacing Fence Posts

replacing fence posts  
think out  
close that which  
in this world are quite  
good fences make go  
neighbor is more  
because the old ones  
the earth feels more  
alternating veins  
beyond the instinctive  
darkness lays a return  
under vertigo and I am  
ether or not I should  
beg four-by-fours  
know that story  
recovering something  
wear a buried silly  
padlock or a toy  
folded patiently and  
him playing

## Fear

the many worries  
culminate tomorrow  
when it could  
I can't write it  
suddenly I can't face it

## Passing Alive

today a dark figure  
cared not to stop  
or even slow  
though he glanced my way  
and moved his mouth  
not to a smile  
but just a smirk  
or maybe (think about it)  
a wink

## Change as Dust

she paused to kiss me  
opened her mouth  
I not knowing what to do  
did the minimum  
which was mimic  
later under blankets and cheap sleeping bags  
unfolded into comforters  
we held on and now  
it's all molding away  
falling all around  
and back where home was then  
the same phone is there  
to call on



## On Women

these nudes perplex  
their skin so smooth  
no woman I've shot  
looks like them  
maybe I need some new filters

## I Am So Highj

nothing like the feel of things  
just going wrong going  
wrong going wrong going  
wrong going wrong going wrong  
going wrong going wrong going wrong  
going wrong going wrong  
which is what happens when the world  
is or is  
treated like a feedbackless machine

## Dodging

who is sleek  
who is tanned and trimmed  
who knows how to show it off  
when enticed by the cameraman  
find me someone like that  
and watch me become  
an artist

## Riverside

somewhere the flags have been taken down  
the dogs have been fed walked and bedded down  
the tall grass has stopped waving and the sun  
has agreed with all this and has told the ground  
it is ok to sleep / where I sit on the bank  
of a river eager to run to sea the only sound  
is the shushing whisper of water by the shore  
and the small splashes of fish jumping  
out where only the sodium lights reflections  
light the swirling current / I am alone  
but you should have known that by now

## Fervor

a wrapper blowing down the road  
a can barreling along a curb  
and then into the gutter  
a dog looking back and slouching  
around the corner  
all on a cold wind  
a day of indeterminate cloudiness

## Regrettance

poetic justice I suppose  
the old ready to be  
discarded man standing  
in the living  
room of his boyhood home  
ready to fall down around him  
whole sections off limits  
for safety black mold throughout  
water stains on the ceilings  
every appointment exactly  
as he left it decades earlier  
slow growing trees out front  
50' tall where he sat by the windows  
on the hearth and watched the sun  
drop to here and pray to be there  
now too molded over to even  
stand near where his mother watched  
her mother die fading all color to the gray  
he was himself covered with  
only the dead were safe

## Believably

the cellar after some fire  
had crashed the house above into it  
became a dump or perhaps the house  
was a barn because of the passage into the cellar  
but next to its corner near the road  
and near the orchard a lilac grew  
tall and fragrantly purple  
and had I thought then to photograph it  
what things I would know today  
what stories I could make up  
more believably

## Death Chamber

go ahead?  
nothing I can say can change the past  
I done lost my voice  
I would like to say goodbye  
my heart goes is going ba bump ba bump ba bump  
is the mic on?  
I don't have anything to say  
I am nervous and it is hard to put my thoughts together sometimes you don't know what to say  
man there is a lot of people there



## A Man's Duty

by the horse barn the fawn  
lies hit by a car in the night  
the smell of the horse waste  
covers that of the fallen fawn  
air-filled blood spilled from her nose  
passing by previous days I had seen her  
grazing with her mother the sturdy doe  
in the meadow above the barn  
today as I climbed up past the meadow  
the doe lifted her head spread her ears  
wide to fathom my approach and  
watched me pass by carrying her sadness  
for her

## Corridors

in a window overlooking  
the wet sidewalk a woman  
watches the rain and slight wind  
release the condensed oils and heat  
from a long summer without rain  
the first rain is like this  
she is too

## Thinking in a Box

when the actress takes it all off  
with the cameras running  
and the dialog is about  
not showing her bush  
that's when you know  
you life was not lived

## Doing His Work

the devil walks down main street  
looking for all the businesses  
doing his work but that's a waste  
of words because he's really just  
looking for all the businesses

## Hollow Sounds

I was caught up in her shoes  
her heels stepping across a sidewalk  
heat pressure the clicking  
the blue of them  
the faded color of gum on the sidewalk  
nearby a pair of rails not yet  
tired from bearing steel weight  
I followed while I failed  
and the light  
the faltering lesson

## Tonight Another

the funny little things  
that happen when the bugs  
enter your wirings

## Realistically

the filament is waving in the breeze  
that makes the evenings filter in the cool ocean  
the snapshot that's now holds all the people  
I can love even though possibilities seem to expand  
like an inbreath before the out  
even now fading is the evening  
light and fabric that could be mine

## My Old Bud

sitting on a bench  
at the end of a shady street  
on a bench out there in the hot  
sun the one I've ran across many times  
my old friend failure



## Procedamus in Pace

once / actually a year ago  
it grew cool one evening  
late sunlight followed the trend  
the room cooled  
there were ways to warm up  
ways even for some people  
to grow happy  
a turning point might have happened  
had the train carried one extra passenger  
and mystery were permitted  
to unfold if the breath were to be unheld  
it could have been cold for many nights

## Out of Mouths

also like  
male vervets  
and Campbell's monkeys  
male Dianas  
have a scrotum  
that's a tasteful  
shade of blue

## Uses of Disorder

what is it when you can observe  
the envelope of your life  
see the time that has taken you  
watch what you watched be built  
fall down / fall down / fall down

## Progression

if I could get it all back  
I would  
if I could build it back the way it was  
I would  
it once was a world that I commanded  
it was a chunk that was mine  
walking on it was walking on my home  
I miss it like a friend gone for good  
would I  
I would

## Middle

about as often as dry lightning  
where the prairie drops to a ravine  
holding a meandering near dried out riverlet  
stories are written about such places  
cottonwoods have gathered around the bed  
making a deceptive cool oasis (like)  
but the prairie holds things flat  
no distinctions / no story  
I'm interested

## Hemlock It Is

tonight it's the big wind  
outside raking across the windows  
and roof rattling the water down in the pond  
the animals have huddled as they have been genetically  
taught to do / the details in the song playing  
don't match up / as if ever other word were shifted  
left in meaning and the others up and to the right  
the when you put the wind on top of the song  
you get a trip 40 years back when the house  
that's decided to fall over was new enough  
you could smell the wood drying

## Go Back to the Beginning

imagine your own orchard  
a pear orchard with one large  
mcintosh tree at one corner  
and a little barb wire fence around it  
now picture it's mid-fall and the pears  
have fallen and the apples have too  
the grass has dried out to translucent  
tubes around the trees  
the pear trees were stubbed and old when I knew them  
imagine another orchard not far  
a cherry orchard with just a few trees  
maybe 4 or 6 and their fringy bark  
imagine having these and apple trees spread around too  
and grapes in trees enough grapes to make a year of juice and jelly  
blueberries in low bushes so fat that I can plunge  
my hands into the buckets we pick them in  
eat my fill and no one notices  
then imagine it's all gone now  
gone to me because such abundance  
calls to the one who loved it most

## The Trees Comment

the darkness isn't sinister  
it's part of the lovely scenery  
it's the curve in branches and trunks  
it's the bark seeming to curl off the trees  
the occasional low clouds that drift off drizzle  
now the only outside (the road) is my inside  
I stand on it / stand on its edge  
I look out which once was looking in  
this time of day / when the evening rises  
remember / the darkness isn't sinister



## Too

she can't be real  
not her face  
her name  
what she can do  
I'll call it talent  
she is too

## Visitation

the blacktop road  
was made from oil and sand  
as the sand was pulverized by cars and trucks  
the oilfilled sand formed sidewalks  
along the road a yellowed sand  
you don't see much anymore  
near the cities / but where they are  
that's where home is

## Final Fling

no one positions  
the leg braces like a journeywoman  
who has traveled here with her sisters  
two abreast and not only that  
knows deep shit about braces

## Smitten

I am waiting for the caper  
to begin / the lesson of deliverance  
nothing but mighty / I am fatigued  
at the thought of deliverance  
the deliverer is driving away  
his tailpipe spewing  
his car disappearing into smoke

## Of Sorts

in a way the lights on the bridge  
have been on forever  
the bridge's yellow has always been there  
the water has flowed and has stopped  
the water has been low and the river dried up  
the water has risen above the bridge and everyone on it  
the lights are blue and the bridge yellow  
in the middle they meet up to make a pleasant white

## Can't Stop

everywhere tonight the lights have dimmed  
candles were lit and the women have all drawn  
their baths stepped out of their gowns and attire  
our attention has been drawn to their calves  
as they step in one by one and the bubbles froth up  
their eyes close as one and outside the city  
fills with blue rain and yellow lights  
do I see your tears

## Under Achieve

when your cover's blown  
the streets swiped clean by typhoon wind  
the streets washed clean by typhoon rain  
you find yourself on an island  
tall buildings ready to fall you think  
but you are the one to fall  
your cover's blown

## Cellar Flowers

lingering like lilacs  
on the purple of the morning  
slewing scent and skipping breakfast  
looking down at the sandy driveway  
from a small rise by the lilac  
someone's important bush once  
now along by the hole in the ground  
that once was a cellar



## In A Long Ago House

they are poorly made  
the daughters for some reason  
one cramped upstairs  
one in a home  
the one talking to me  
speaks simply and shows off childish  
things / she smiles into the deep past

## Memphis

her voice comes in two  
pieces / one edged with small serrations  
she uses it to start her cut  
the other like the surface of small pond  
on a windless day / she uses  
it to float you into her dream

**By**

in the room above heart-  
break street near the hotel  
of lonely hearts the poet of id-  
ioms waits for inspiration  
to pass

## Aphoristic Brevity

the meal is basic and rough  
the company is aleatoric  
at best / we talk but I'm unable  
to focus well and important stories  
are for me unavailable  
the meat though is the star  
and we share it as if close  
but we are as different  
as different is from same

## Fragile Undercurrent of Hope for a Quick Trip

the beauty of the snow  
beating down hard in high elevations  
with all the silence of the ocean's  
hard press on the face of the earth  
it's on

## Extinguished

the world waits  
for what follows on  
there's no time to underscore  
the important points  
forgiveness's equation  
is all imaginary coefficients  
and unforeseen variables

## Kind of Empty

the moon triply large  
enough for an evening  
of open mouths and expectations  
like luck forbearance takes a back  
seat in high speed chases  
I wish the year would slow down

## Hate Apple

why does this crappy shit  
always happen just when I'm  
about to leave



## Under the Sky Tonight

tropical clouds firm up  
up high and with sun behind near dusk  
they urge a hint of languorous lust  
and a pair of mojitos but  
the sun's downer pre-sages cool  
rain and tropical wind  
aimed into the heart from the west  
the west as known in myth and romance  
a longer ride / a ride into the west  
would swap topics for desert  
wet for dry / my car's primed  
for it / for the ride and the result  
mojitos then tequilas this and the eyes  
downturned and animalistic  
no lust but all lust let's have it  
all tonight

## Your Destination

play the drama  
don't explain but narrate  
tell it / weep it / wail and wait  
but it will come to you  
release

## Over You

I'm interested in your line of sight  
the lines I see you in  
the angle of the highlights  
the lighting of the days  
with you / the ways I make my way  
past the night that unfolds  
beneath you

## Everything Wrong

oh zzzzz  
the night away  
ye of little sleep

## I Miss Her

what year  
what time of day  
the envelope please  
the story's end and beginning

## Alignment

she is not the light  
gorgeous I remember her  
to be and I  
wish to depart

## Fear of It

the love of it  
I sit with the beauties  
in 2 days a day will come  
to witness my demise  
undone

## Special But Unnoticed Goodbye

when she stepped up  
the bus steps / humid enough  
for everyone to sweat  
I hoped she'd turn for one  
last look and when she didn't  
I turned away toward my room  
and remaining life / but when I  
turned back to watch her step  
finally into the aisle and away  
I caught her turning away  
from me again / these glances  
pose the problem of relation  
a dizzying problem



## You

they say it rained  
misted all day and cold  
as they drove to the hospital  
and parked under an oak  
bringing me forth broke  
some things and I turn  
now to decrepit old age  
no one left to love  
me

## Hospital

I got the call around 6 that he wanted me to come to the hospital that night. After work and after taking care of the animals. The cows, the chickens. You know we had them all and it was my job now along with Nana to take care of them. *Hos podee pomilloj* that was work. He wanted to tell me something important, he said, and after the operation he didn't look good. He teared up when he moved his body from side to side and when he coughed or laughed. The doctors didn't tell us anything—they didn't want to tell Nana because all she would do is curse them in Russian. I told them she was expressing her pain. And she was. She drank all day. She'd ask me to go out into the back field and dig up a jar. I already dug all those up and I was going into the small field behind that where we grew the rye for the last ones.

Work—you don't know work like this. Get there at 7 and stitch at the machines until noon; one break maybe for *choonies*; and then lunch. One last break and I could leave. I didn't need to go out for lunch. This wasn't like high school where those stinkers made fun of my dark bread and kielbasa. And a pickle and lemonade in a jar—the same jars your Nana drank out of all day. I took smoke breaks too, but just at the windows. We'd watch the branches and trash go down the Merrimack. I told you about the big flood the year before this? That was 1936 and this was the year later—1937—in July.

I got there about 6:30 that night. I didn't eat and Nana was already asleep. The first time since...since the horse kicked him in his stomach. I remember thinking he would die and then what would I do? I didn't want to work and do the farm too. I wanted to go to Boston and find a man who wore suits to work every day. Not home-made clothes that sweat through every day. Clothes you hung out on the line and bluejays would make their messes on.

I wanted to stop for a cone but I thought better go see him and stop on the way back. I stopped into the office Ethel worked in, but she'd gone home already. The nurses said hi and I stopped outside his door. He was up on the second floor and his room faced the Amesbury cemetery. I stood where I could see the end of this bed. His legs were uncovered and they looked spindly from not working all day for a week. The curtains were pushed onto the screens from the fan they set up to push the hot air out the window. They thought it was better to pull in the cool evening air than push out the hot. It wasn't even time for the cool air to spill in from the outside. I watched for about 5 minutes and once he moved his legs—he moved his feet in closer so he could bend his knees. His knees hurt and he always was moving his legs to find a position where they didn't hurt him. I heard him suck in his breath and he swore in Russian but quiet because he didn't want anyone to know he was in pain. He never did. Outside some cars drove by and I could smell the cooking meat nearby so there must have been a breeze.

I was afraid of what he wanted to tell me. Maybe he heard from the doctors. Maybe he could feel the pain taking over. Maybe he wanted Nana to come visit, but she didn't and didn't want to. And besides, she was drunk all day and crying up in her room. Maybe she could feed the chickens while I was at work. Who would see? Who would care? I wasn't going to be able to do all the work much longer. I needed someone to help. Connie was away as usual in Beverly with those sluts he always found. Or gambling or fishing.

But if I stood there any longer I wouldn't be able to not cry. I didn't like him to see me cry. It made him cry but he wouldn't show me that. I straightened by dress and walked in.

I looked up past his head and smiled and quickly sat down facing the window. Hi Tato. Pretty hot today again. Did you get anything good to eat? Anyone come to visit?

I wanted to fill the time with things like this to avoid looking at him. When you don't really say anything like this you don't have to look at the face. Not look at the eyes. I didn't want to cry. I didn't want to say goodbye.

Helen, you're too good. Your heart is too good. Too big. You trust too many. Too much. I have taken care of you all these times but now no more. This kick is no good. Some day—any day—any minute it will not be good and I will be gone and you be alone. You remember the time I start give you money for lunch at school? So you and Connie walk to the café over in Merrimac square instead of the lunches Nanya make for you? You think I so smart but instead it was the *sobakas* give it away. Ever day the machine come for you and Connie and you get

in. But ever day those *sobakas* run after the machine and come back after 15, 20 minutes. One time I see one has something in its mouth. You know what it is? Your sandwich he carry back and try to dig a hole to save for later. One day I follow after you go. I get on Nigger and follow about 5 minutes. By time I get saddle on Nigger you past the pond and maybe to Roy's almost. When the machine head over to Hoyt's I stop behind bushes and I see you and Connie throw the sandwiches in the ditch. And I think do you not like them? Home you eat kielbasa and like the bread we get.

Then I think it. All children in school are Americans and you are Russians. You eat different and sometimes talk to you brother Connie in Russian. I know girls want to be friends and have many friends all the time. I think it maybe I give one dollar each ever day and you walk to the café in the square. What does it take? Make 2 more jars of *gorilka* in a week and sell it to the chief? This I do for you.

You have the heart I have for you. But you are not hard and people going take what they want from you.

I didn't know what he was saying or what he was talking about. I knew about how he found out we couldn't eat those sandwiches in front of the kids at school. Sometimes Connie and I would take a walk over to where the Elementary school is now—go to the old foundation where the factory burned down and on the far side eat our sandwiches. We'd have to run back to the school to make it before the second bell. But better than being called rooskies and pollocks. Your grandfather noticed one day the dogs would always follow us on the bus and go after the sandwiches we threw out the back. They'd come back licking their chops or one would run after the other carrying back a kielbasa like a stick. He didn't want us to suffer those indignities every day, and so he gave us each 1 dollar and we went to the restaurant in the Square. It's where the post office is now.

You too good. You need trust no one. Not police, not fireman, not neighbors. Not Sam. Not even your friends. Or your husband. One day you have one and lots children but not trust him with ever thing. Save it in a place only for you. Some day—some day soon—I won't be here. NENYA—she no good too. She say you lazy but you not lazy. I don't want you to work too much but you not lazy. She say you ugly but she forgets you are her daughter and cannot be ugly. You save your heart for your children like I save mine for you. I know you are a *szhinka* now and now is good time to tell you story of how I come to America. You think it easy like NENYA. She have her brother Usten and her family is not poor. They were cooks to the czar once and still they have money and some power. She came on the big boat from England after the train to France and the boat to England. She sat in a fancy sleeping room the whole way. Not me. I walked, I rode in cart, on horse. I stayed in plenty bad places. I went from my village, Teremcy, to Germany Hamburg. I work there until I can pay boat to America. I learned to be hard on that trip and now I tell you that trip.

Nana told you how she came here on the Arabic from Bristol, and she told me the same story. How she was so young but her brother sent her the money and she came over afraid but in some comfort. Your grandfather always said Me same to this story, so I wondered about it. It didn't seem like a long time for him to tell me how he wanted me to be hard, but he talked slowly and at times in Russian but mostly in English. You would have liked him. You are like him a little. More like your father, but like your grandfather too. You are tall like him. You look like me and I look like him.

He moved his legs every couple of minutes and this made him wince and stop talking. He took the covers and wiped his eyes sometimes. Sometimes he'd hear the breeze or a bird call out—a mockingbird and a jay—and he'd stop to listen. He'd say You hear the river? I hear it and smell it. I lived near a river in the old country and that's why I live here. The old country she look like here.

I'd brought a chip of ice from the ice house. It was in front of the barn, but it burned down in the fire. I chopped off a chip of ice and wrapped it in a towel, and I splintered it with his cup and put it in the cup. It was so hot in the room and so humid. Nothing dried out. And the nights didn't cool much. They were haying in all the fields nearby and I could smell the cut grass. They were trying to dry it before taking it into the barns.

He would talk—tell his story—in short spurts. Then he'd put some ice in his mouth. He knew it came from the pond and it was the ice he had cut and hauled up into the icehouse the Winter before. He had packed it in hay in the cellar of the icehouse where it stayed cold all Summer. He knew this was the last ice he would cut.

But I think he saw it as a circle not as a line that started and then stopped, the pen coming down, pushing along, then lifting up of a sudden. A line drawn by a god or by chance. Someone who would on whim start a life and stretch it out, wiggle it, turn it in circles, start in one village and move it to another. Move the line in time and on a map and then almost as if he were interrupted by someone coming in the door and shouting hello or by the thought of a love he had forgotten and in that melancholy moment lift the pen—maybe a small accident—and end the life flowing out its nib. And he—whoever it was, god or devil—could never put the pen down precisely in the same spot and resume the life. The life was gone. The headstone was its last epilog.

He believed in that line, in that pen. And he could hear, maybe, the door opening and the clatter of feet of his life's interrupter, or maybe it was the perfume of the woman who would remind his drawer of lines of their night together and the pen was about to come up to his forehead as that more important remembering unfolded. Anyhow, he would pause and seem to listen, and I knew he was not going to stop his story.

## Teremcy

My name Powell Sanuk, and I was born in Teremcy in the Ukraine in 1888. I was born in the Winter; in January but the Russian calendar. I went to school for 3 years in Winters, but the school was not always every year. And after three years I was not able to go to school more because it was costing 200, 250 rubles at that time. I had a brother, an older brother, and when I was done with school I was helping him with the farm. And my father too. We lived in a house with a straw roof. Very steep. And we live in 3 rooms—kitchen and where we eat, and 2 rooms for sleeping.



His village was near a river; his farm was owned by a local family. His family raised milk cows and supplied the owners and they sold the rest in the village. The village was named Teremcy and when you try to find it on the map today you'll first find the larger town of the same name to the West and North near Chernobyl, and if you read books about the accident there you'll read of the medical efforts in Teremcy. But this isn't the one my father grew up in. His village was about 150 miles to the southeast of Lvov, 215 miles to the southwest of Kiev, and 230 miles north of Odessa in the Ukraine. When I first heard this story and for many years, I never knew any of this detail. I heard only his stories told in the evenings or while we worked the farm in Merrimac. They say everyone has a story they believe in that makes them who they are.

story was important to her because it changed her for life. I grew up with the woman this story made, and so you can say that this story made me. It's a story I can mostly only imagine because I've worked it over in my head for 60 years. What sorts of stories lead our minds this way? What's yours? Do you know it even a little? 60 years. I've been alive too long. Too long with this story pulling me in one direction; in another direction. Could my father really be all the people I've known and the ones in the story. The story. The story. Richie, can you make it stop?

Teremcy was in the wooded part of the Ukraine, and making a farm was a difficulty. My grandfather had no doubt pulled stones and built walls and sheds with them; had cleared land enough for cows and chickens—for goats too I suppose and all the other sorts of crops and animals you needed to survive in an old land but a remote one. My father did the same thing here. The land was same, he always said. Maybe colder there. And maybe more misty, and the land smelled more of fertile soil and the river ran clear; the trees denser and warmer in the Winter than here. He told me the wind came from the West and blew across the flatlands and he said sometimes—only once or twice a year—he could smell the rich and refined cooking smells of his patron.

He was born in Teremcy and went to school enough to know a little arithmetic, and he could read a little and write. Enough to help his father run the farm, but his mother knew and his father did too that my father was smarter than his brother, and smarter than them too. So they sent him some weeks in the Spring and Autumn before planting and after harvesting—when only the animals needed tending—they sent him to the priest in Podilsky to learn more, and there he learned how to keep books and how to read the newspapers and even some books.

When his days in the local school were over he still went Springs and Autumns to the priest and his education continued. When he was 10 he started fixing the farm machines, showing some talent for repairing bangs and dents in metal, holding a flat hammer behind the damage and hitting easily on the other side, then filing out the dings from the peens. If there was paint he could finish the repair so you couldn't find it. With wood he was less facile but could raise a wall and thatch a roof. With his brother one Summer he put up two or three small chicken coops—just some simple plaster over boards for walls whitewashed with a thatched roof, tall like the church roof in the village. They were raised up on stilts to keep out the wet and some of the bugs. They built a ramp for the chickens to get in.

He could do all these things but he didn't like work. He liked to walk through the woods, go to the same favorite spots. Find soft needles under a tree with the sun above and lie there dreaming of a life like his family's patron, spending the days riding his land and evenings reading the papers and the sad Russian writers. In the Winter he

would hitch his pair of horses to the sleigh and ride out over the fields and up the hills in the moonlight, his fat wife bundled and the two of them singing country songs. At the river overlook they'd tie the horses to a bramble and she would let him feel her under her furs; he would take off his gloves and stand behind her with his hands up under her blouses and over her breasts even in the coldest winter air. My father didn't tell me these details but told me he dreamed of the warmth of women in winter and described the sleigh like dried branches against the moonlight on the snow. The river frozen over and like a flat road through its valley. But I knew. I saw him behind my mother, his hands under her clothes often enough. He was an imitator, and he must have been imitating someone those times. He was a romantic, a sentimental boy who watched quietly but remembered everything. Smart but not educated. Clever but not methodical.

He told me he knew one girl then—Larissa—when he was 15 who brought her paints and painted vines and flowers above the windows. She said the whitewash made a nice background. The coops were in heavy woods of hemlocks, maples, and elms, and the chickens would scratch up bugs from under the leaves all day and at night they climbed the ramp into their coops, each hen choosing the nest box from the night before and clucking themselves to sleep. Some mornings his mother would spread some grain for them or some of the leftovers no would eat any more.

He said when he was 16 he had his first girl friend. He said *divcheeka* so I think she was special. I wondered whether it was Larissa—he told me stories about her and about his *divcheeka*, and the stories seemed told with the same affection. How they would take some sausages and a jar of tea to the hills and look down at the river, the boats gliding down in the breezes. How they would hold each other by their hands and around the waist in the thick woods when they needed to step over the fallen trees and branches. How after church once he turned to her quickly and kissed her the way he saw his father kiss his mother when he was quietly behind her and she turned from the stove.

One day, maybe I was 18 years old. It was a Sunday, I was out in morning fix door to barn I hear my Nanya call to me and brother. She say come quick. My Tatu hurt he have pain in chest and arm and can no stand no eat too good. He drink but just little bit. He like this for 2 weeks. We come run and go to his bed. He tell me and brother what happen next. He say his time done and now we must be man take care of farm. He say brother is head of family and I must help him. I must give up work on machine and help with cows and animals. Help plant and harvest. I must do everything brother say. Must not marry not move away until brother children old enough to help. Maybe only 10 year more. He tell me listen to Nanya and do what she say. He say I know how work but no want. Lazy. So I must follow orders and not walk in woods. No spend time with girl.

His father died that night. I think his mother and brother were by the bed and the priest was sitting nearby. My father said he was sitting in the kitchen looking in through the opening, the curtain pulled aside so the stove fire could heat the room. He said he could see his father wince and cough every few minutes. He held his left arm and for the first time in years let fear escape to his face. Just when it seemed his father was about to fall asleep he heard a deep sigh that ended in something like a growl. His father tried to sit up but only rolled onto his side. His mother called to him with her pet name for him but he just lay there on his side, his eyes fixed on the worn floor. The priest rose and made the sign of the Orthodox cross on his head and chest leaving behind the wet spots left by the water he dipped his fingers in. He sang a short prayer and took his mother by the arms and walked her backwards into the kitchen saying Tonight you must wash him and prepare him and tomorrow I will return. We'll take him to the church and I will find men to dig his grave. You must do this for your husband and for Christ. This is the way. He was a good man and has left instructions for his sons to keep you safe the rest of your life. But his mother couldn't listen, her cries soft but strong enough to block her mind from the words and the necessities of the next few days.

My father sat there and just watched. His brother began moving chairs out of the sleeping room and putting



them behind the table in the kitchen. He talked to the priest quietly and seemed to be making plans in his head for what needed to happen. After the priest left he went out to the barn and brought in some straw and covered it with a rough linen for a bed for his mother by the bedside. He turned his father onto his back and covered him with a grey wool blanket. He gathered the cups they had used for tea and put them in the bucket to be washed next morning. He was all thought and reason with no tears, no emotions, no passion. He was for that night not Ukrainian at all but like a western man, like the Germans.

After all the small details of the moment were taken care of he told his brother—my father—that he needed to take charge of the cows, chickens, all the animals. He said You can watch a nuthatch fall dead off a branch without self pity and that's how you must be these next days. Think of your mother. Forget yourself.

But my father could never forget himself, and telling him to made him think all the more of his resentment at being thought the indulged child. He wanted to run to the barn and jump into the straw and curl up into his dream position so he could start to fathom his father's dying like that just where he could watch. He needed to replay his mother's reaction, figure out the intentions of the priest. This was his first death—except for barn animals and a dog. He went to the bedroom and stood by the shape of his father on the bed and over his mother who was crying into her pillow, lying on her side her knees up near her chest. He reached under the blanket and felt his father's leg and it was warm. It was hot and he wondered Was he really dead? Had he really gone? He expected almost that his father would cough and call for a drink.

The fire, his brother said. Keep the fire going all night. I will be cold tonight and Nenya must not be cold. Soon I must get her out of her bed so she can prepare Tatu. Go, get the wood and raise the fire. Get a bucket of water and begin it heating.



Well, that's how I think of this part of the story. It's what I see myself doing—it's like what I did when my father died. Not the same because he died in that hospital after the story he told was finished. The details, where did I get them? When Olga came back from the old country she brought pictures. And I figured my father built a farm here like the one he lived on there, no matter how much he hated it. He wasn't lazy—I watched him work and work all my life. Until he died, and then it was my job. And the priest—I watched Orthodox priests here enough to know.

I've heard this part of the story many times. He talks about his father dying every Christmas. He never says what time of year it was, but he says it was cold, never mentions snow. Maybe it was near Christmas. His mother died—she must have—but he never heard it, never heard a date or how. His brother wrote him once or twice; maybe had someone write the letter for him. The writing is so fine but strong. I've seen the letters but they burned when the house did. 1944 it burned. Christmas Eve. 7 years after my father died—July 1937. He lost his family when he came here. Maybe he lost them the night his father died. I don't know.

## Felling the Hemlock

Next day Nanya and brother tell ever one Tatu dead. We hang *peremitky* on windows. And we build big fire outside bedroom. We no drink in the bedroom and all the women blow soul away from chairs before sit down. My family quite big though I have one brother only and all of them come by to help clean and get ready. I make it my job make coffin and it take all day. Lotsa people cry all day. Not me.



Tatu spent these days alone working on the coffin and wondering how his life would unfold. The work itself was difficult. They didn't keep boards but instead needed to fashion them from fresh cut trees. My father sharpened his axe on the stone and sliced some wedges from oak logs in the firewood stack. He grabbed a sledge and went out into the woods and found a thick hemlock. He always told me hemlock was the best wood to use if you needed to use green wood because it never shrank. It would creak as it dried but not change size. He added a room to our house on the farm and it became my bedroom when I was about 8. My mother would come up to send me off to sleep, kiss me and tell me a story, and then go back down the stairs. After about 15 minutes I'd hear footsteps coming up to my room, walk down the hallway, come into my room, stop by the bed, and then 10 minutes later walk out and back down. I thought this was a ghost, but I couldn't figure out whose, because ghosts wander the rooms that they knew and my room was new. My father explained that my mother had compressed the hemlock boards on the way up and into my room, and after a time those hemlock boards released and repeated the pattern of her walking. He said this was all that ghosts were—the memories of boards. Hemlock took 20 years to cure.

The tree he found was by the field his father had been clearing and it was in a stand free of brush and saplings, shaded by a roof of pine and cedar. On the south side—the side near the clearing—he saw the imprint of his father sitting for lunch or resting, uneaten crumbs still by his right hand. He walked around the tree looking up to find how it was leaning. He hugged the tree the way he saw his uncles do looking up to see how the tree would fall. It had no preference so he chose toward the field—there were no large trees in the way that way. He moved his sledge and wedges to the backside of the tree, took the axe and stood with the tree a bit to his left and took a swing just above his waist. He followed that with a chop down toward a place that would meet his first cut about halfway through the trunk. For about 5 minutes he alternated chops horizontal and at an angle. But the tree was not softwood and the work was hard. The cool autumn air wasn't able to keep up with his work and soon he was sweating through his shirt.

When the notch was finished he went to the back of the tree and started his back notch just above the front. While he chopped he would stop to look up at the top of the tree—was it wavering, was it trembling? And even with all the work he did around the farm this was hard work and of a sort he wasn't used to. He sweated and ached like a lazy boy, the sort of boy his father thought him to be. But he was watching the tree just as his uncles had taught him, he thought. Or hoped.

After a while he saw the tree start to lean, but it was toward the back cut, away from the field. His back notch wasn't thick, and the wedges were thicker. He inserted one and punched it into the gap. When the tree started to lean toward the field he stepped around to the other side and started to deepen the front notch. His uncles would not approve. He heard the sounds a tree makes when its trunk has been sliced to a thin shim and he went around the back, picked up and sledge and tapped in the wedge a little more, and then leaned on the tree above the notch. Nothing.

He started to push and release the tree, hoping that by swaying it like an upside down pendulum it would go over, but when the swing got wide enough, the wedge came out, and the tree did fall with a deep cracking sound but back away from the field. As it began to fall he stopped to look up to see what was happening, and this was just enough time for him to get caught under the branches as he ran out to the side.

He wasn't knocked out but it took a minute for him to realize what had happened. He was pinned under a branch, and he wasn't hurt. He was a stuck though, and his axe was over by the base of the tree. He wasn't one



to panic, and his thoughts didn't race toward how to escape but instead he began to dream as if the branch was a blanket and it was time for a nap. He was tired, he was exhausted from the effort, and the sun was warming his back, and the leaves and needles under him were like a bed. The shape of the future for him called to him and he started imaging himself in a tall house in an important city like Berlin or even London. He imagined literary folks sitting around his fire and they were discussing a new book. As he imagined them sipping fine beer he started to forget parts of his waking dream and he knew next he would fall asleep.

The little giggle. He was sure he heard it. Then the cough-like bursts from a nose somewhere on the other side of the trunk—not far, but not right there.

Does the great woodsman find himself making love to his conquest?

Olena. Olena was my father's first real what you would call today girlfriend. They had grown up near each other, played in the woods and around the farm together, and now that she had begun to fill out like a good Ukrainian woman, different aspects of her than her playfulness began to interest him, and his feelings for her weren't tender as much as they were a pain in his chest that wouldn't go away by thinking of the cities and fine conversation. Thinking of my father that way—it's easier than thinking of my mother but it took a while, and now that I'm not long for this world, it seems more like a TV show I'm telling you about. I know they spent late afternoons and dusk up on the hills or down by the river. On weekends they might take the train to the mountains—50 miles away and with a meal packed it was a perfect day as he used to say.

He told me once they traveled to the Carpathians when he was 17 and near sunset they were sitting under a sheltering pine. A warm evening late in the Summer, and he had been telling Olena of his dreams to live in the city, become famous for conversation and his artistic sense—how he would make all the girls sad with his words and one by one they would come to him and cry privately into his neck and tell it would be all right one day. After these tales and after the kielbasa was gone and the milk he turned from her and looked down into the valley where the train that would take them home was just coming into view along the river, and he said One day I'll get on that train and I'll never return home.

Making love, but I'm the woman and this hemlock the man. I am under his spell and like all men he wishes me not escape when he's finally aboard.

Oh, Pawlie, the woman is not always on the bottom you know.

The saw—get the saw and cut me free.

She did after a show of hunting for the saw, then not knowing for sure which branch to start with, nor how to use it properly.

He stood and brushed the sawdust off then sat on the trunk which settled down under his weight.

Tatu is dead.

Yes, we all heard. Your uncle came through the village. And anyway we saw the fire, and then the children ran through the village and yelled Kerchiefs on the Sanuk windows. Yes, we all have heard. And you?

He was himself last night. Commented on my laziness—oh yes, my laziness. And then he finally said it. Pylyp is to have the farm, and I am to be his peasant. I am to obey until Pylyp has courted, married, given the farm children, and those children are ready to take my place. Not even the metal work. Not the machines that you know I can fix and make new.

And not Berlin?

Berlin, perhaps. Nenya always just sits and listens when my father finds one thing wrong with me after another. Later she'll comb my hair and tell me I must make my own way, and what her husband feels is not what she feels. Yes, yes, of course, this is what mothers do. Is the criticism what fathers always do? Berlin, yes, maybe. Maybe I'll get on the train and let it take me to Berlin, and I'll never come back.

Will you take me?

Of course, Olenchka. I would never leave you behind.

Her hair was in a long tail tied at the back of her head with a kerchief that hung under her red-blond hair as if part of that hair. She wore a green skirt on that day, he told me, and a blue blouse. Blue like the spring sky

or like the blue in the cathedral in Podilsky. Her eyes sparked green over a deep blue, and the dark recesses of them hid her deep in her head. When she spoke her voice rasped a little under the musical overtones. She had the Russian passion—he could feel it in her hands when she held his or in her kisses when the shadows covered them in the trees or the moon whitewashed the hills half grown in rye and millet.

Never, I never would.

She took a step away toward the field.

You must cut these branches, hitch the horse and haul this trunk to the sawyer to make the boards. You must get this all done today. Spirits are on a schedule and cannot wait. Please, Pawlie, do your duty to your family.

He must have thought—I've always knew this—was she starting in on him too? I know he loved her—he talked about her the most, especially the years before he died.

He sawed the branches and piled them to be gathered later for kindling one day, and with her help he cut the trunk in lengths for the coffin. He tied the chain around the trunk and pulled it tight around the branch knots before hitching it to the horse who looked back at him wondering what job it was today, but it wasn't the hay-wagon and hay, so he didn't move ahead on his own but waited for commands and nudges.

The sawyer was waiting for him and needed no instruction. He paused the water wheel and engaged the gearing that spun the saw. He sliced the hemlock into rough boards and cut them by hand to the right length, mitering the ends perfectly for the coffin's shape. He did the top and bottom first with the thickest part of the trunk while my father went to get the rest. While the sawyer worked the second trunk, my father sorted through the rough nails and laid out the boards. He knew the shape, and he knew how to form the box, but he had forgotten about the ribbing. So the sawyer without a word began and my father settled into helper, losing himself in rehearsing his father's command last night and Olena's pushing, her heavy breasts rounding her blouse, her hips still narrow but pushing out her skirt. Her hair catching the sunset, the wind in the hills. Her voice and the softness of her skin under the pads of his fingers as he stroked her, both of them looking off to the hills.

The coffin done as if by magic, he started to tell the sawyer he would bring some eggs and milk, and at the next butchering some pork, but the sawyer crossed himself and said The spirits are on a schedule, and we each move them along toward the ancestors.

Down by the river the train sounded its whistle. The train is on a schedule, too.

## Departed

Dawn came and the preparations began. In farms and huts around the village each woman was cooking or cleaning clothes and plates. In the Sanuk house the fires were up and clothes were laid out. Last night they placed the man in his coffin dressed in his best clothes. My grandmother took my father aside and told him Pawlie, you've made a wonderful coffin and so quickly. I didn't know you were deft with wood like that. Will you become the family carpenter?

No—he said—the work was inspired and without that inspiration, I am only a child with a hammer in his hand.

He had realized, I think, that his role in making the coffin lay mostly in his cutting and hauling, and even in the cutting he was not well adept. And though he had a nostalgia for his father, he swung between a light sadness over his passing and a joy that at least the teasing would stop. He felt undeserving of the criticism, and it wouldn't be for years that he saw that he approached life only on the margins, like the deer who angled cautiously toward the field with good straw but hesitated where the shadows stopped. My father stayed in shadows for most of his life, but he knew the value of the sunlight.

He wished he had spoken more to his father about that side of the family. Now there were answers he would never know, like where did they come from before Teremcy, what was his grandfather like? Were there any artists among them? Or were they always only peasants tending patrons' fields and living only for the few hours after dusk and before sleep? I think that as he grew older, my father would regret not knowing more about his father. Maybe he wanted to know what he was made from, or maybe it was curiosity about a story he should know. Olena talked about her parents' families for hours. Where they were from, what they were like, how many brothers and sisters, how many cousins. The black sheep, the favored and lucky. The bad breaks and early deaths, the children who lived only a few years. Her family was an open book. In fact, the bible she carried carried their names and dates of their births and their deaths. His family had no bible, no record like this. Where she could speak he could only remain silent. Where she was tethered to the past, he was adrift in the present. When she could look backward for security, he could only look forward and hope.

Like any day this one began with a kitchen filled with smoke suffused with the smell of meat, mushrooms, and eggs cooking together in the pan. They sat down to their big meal with mugs of buttermilk and ate in silence. As they were finishing Olena came to the door wearing her black kerchief and beaded dark skirt. Only her jacket showed colors of beginning life, red beads over a light cloth. She carried her family's bible, her face still and unsmiling. Her hair had been brushed to a shine Pawlie could see beneath the kerchief. She let him kiss first one cheek and then the other. She turned toward the bedroom and crossed herself.

Soon the house began to fill and others waited outside. The priest arrived with his chanter. They lit the incense in the censer and began the ritual, singing the liturgy and censing the coffin. The men my uncle chose readied themselves to carry out the coffin. When the priest signaled it was time, they lifted the coffin and turned it so that the dead man was carried feet first out of the room and then across the kitchen to the back door. They stopped and dropped the coffin down toward the threshold and tapped it three times. My grandmother sprinkled the path with barley. When the men had left the house my uncle broke a jar over the spot where the coffin had stood. These were all part of the ritual of Ukrainian funeral as I understood it.

My father had told me that they carried out the dead feet first so they might not find their way back. The threshold ritual was for the departed to bid goodbye and never return, the barley was to keep others from dying in that house, and the jar was a symbol of the renovation of life. These ideas were common in this part of the world long before Christianity came along. Ideas never move through force of logic or like one solid pushing another aside, but like liquids merging or chemicals reacting to form new more complex chemicals or giving off more fundamental ones. Spirituality is not an antidote to superstition but the two are like two companions walking through the dark woods when the storm approaches. No one knows this better than the Russians, the Ukrainians. My father came to know this later when his life had settled into its routine. At his age when his fa-

ther died there was no prospect for routine in a boy. Girls could sense it earlier and prepared, hoping for perhaps only a year of perfect happiness in their lives. Beyond that simply the wash, clean, cook, give birth, and raise-up of children before the back bends and the foot slows, and soon you are among the departed.

At the small church the coffin laid front to back along the spine of the church and the chanting and censing continued. To many, I suppose, this had meaning stemming from the words of the Orthodox Church but to most—and to my father certainly—it was the playing out of what you did to survive the death of a man you knew well and maybe loved, or a woman you cherished at some point in her life. It was no more than the steps you take to get from one village to another. No meaning, just moving forward.

My father sat by Olena who had my grandmother to her other side and the Pylyp. Olena's family sat across the aisle and watched Olena comforting like a practiced mother. Where had she learned this, they must have wondered. My father wasn't a man to examine life this closely, but even he noticed her attention to everyone in his family. She was confident in how she touched them and how she directed them to the church, guided them to the proper seats, held his hand but not with passion during the rituals, standing when it was time, pulling them up, sitting them back down, pointing to the passages in her bible that spread the stories there over the story playing out in their lives at that moment.

She never cried, her eyes never watered, her breath stayed even and calm. He knew she could be the one.



After the church we go cemetery. Just outside a little ways. Church was pretty color—grey sides, blue window frames on outside, green roof made metal, yellow window upstairs outside, then bulbs up top. You know, Russian style church on top. Not gaudy, you know, but colors some sad some happy. Olenchka hold me whole time and I think sometimes I cry a little.

Someone dig grave. I not see it when we go inside. Outside rain little bit and cold coming in. We stand around grave and 4 men use rope lower coffin. Priest he swing censer and he sing with canter. He take shovel and make a cross with dirt on coffin. He make lots of crosses with censer and a shovel and his hand. We call it sealing. Seal so spirit know body not home no more. Something like that. Something.



Olga told me about how the little village churches looked, and that's what I picture. She had some photos but they were so blurry the place looked like a dream someone had years ago. I suppose it was. Here's what I imagine happened after the ceremony. My father and Olena stood there after the people left and watched the men fill in the grave. Then they walked to the stream near the village and sat under a pine in the misting rain. The needles grew warm from their sitting and they held both their hands across their bodies and spoke only a little. In my mind it's a movie and the camera is back in the trees near enough to see their eyes but far enough there is no sound but the slow wind in the treetops. Leaves fell now and then. They put their heads together and nodded yes to each other and she looked down and he looked out. He looks so young in this film, and I can imagine him smiling. This little church and the woods near it aren't near the river and tracks, not in a straight line of sight, and what I hear is not the sound of the train whistle directly but only its echo, not loud but faintly sounding like an organ in church, the whole valley raising the sound of the train like a bell ringing a while after it's been struck.



Kielbasa on plates; beet soup with meat; carp soup; mushroom soup; beetroot salad with beans, peas, and onions; pickled herring salad with onion, sunflower oil, pepper; sauerkraut salad with oil, walnuts, and mayonnaise; braided bread with dried fruit; boiled dumplings stuffed with fruit, potatoes, cheese, and cabbage; cabbage rolls stuffed with millet and minced meat with rice; crepes filled with cheese; roast pork, roast lamb, roast beef, roast veal; jellied meat; fish fritters; potato fritters with sour cream and cottage cheese; shashlyky; ground walnut cake; pampushky. For drinks—beer of course, vodka, kefir, buttermilk. Oh, they ate. Just before dusk and well into the night. After my father died we did the same but the menu was more restricted because they'd all become Americans. There was some singing and some dancing. A couple of the men could play their guitars.

When the eating was over my grandmother took a glass of vodka made right there in the village by their friends the Scherbons and a piece of bread broken off at the start of the celebration and put it on the windowsill in the room where he died. The traditional belief was that the dead man would return each day for 9 days.

The next day, she and her family took a luncheon to the grave to wake her husband. This was the end of the funeral and remembering was all that was left. On the third day, his soul would depart his body and begin its journey, visiting his favorite places and returning home. On the ninth day his spirit would leave his body. Spirit and soul, such distinctions to make. Maybe the soul is what they believed before the churches came and spirit what the churches added.

But it was the fortieth day that held the miracle. You would think they would test this miracle—they certainly could, but who would do it? Who would report the results. In Teremcy there was no science and so there were no facts, just stories and suspicions. There was no reasoning, just imagining. This is where my father grew up, came to live in his dreams, learned to despise his father and then his brother, fell slowly like a falling leaf in the gentlest autumns for Olena and spent every afternoon for her a whole summer. He worked as his father told him to, but he also worked in the metal shops. He fashioned stamped sheets of metal for decoration in the churches, for roof decoration. He told me his best metal work then was a façade for a root cellar in the next village. He made a metal door with a curved metal rain roof, and a gutter along the top to protect the designs from rain.

If he was happy after his father died and before he left he never told me about it. He had to have been. He speaks with tenderness about Olena, how though she rarely laughed it was a deep laugh from beyond her body. He told me about her eyes, her hair sometimes braided. She wore beaded skirts in bright colors every Spring and Summer, but her season was Autumn. Did they ever make love? Oh, Richie, how should I know. Can I imagine it? Not with my father in the picture, but I can imagine someone in a story about my father who would have made love to her. Look, the sun set there just as it does here. There are meadows and small lakes. There was a river just like here. There were trees and soft beds of needles. They were nearly 20. They were with each other almost every day. They were alive.



The miracle on the fortieth day: The body ceased to exist. Not such a miracle when you think quickly about it. Of course the body eventually ceases to exist. Decay must triumph. And the villagers didn't embalm or anything. When told plainly, this must mean that they believed the body disappeared on the fortieth day, and if you were to dig up the coffin you'd find nothing. This is the miracle.

Philosophers could explain it this way: Without the soul and without the spirit, the flesh that was once a vehicle for life ceased to exist and reverted to, well, meat. So if you were to dig, you'd find a thing that looked like a body but was not.

In Teremcy, though, I think it was literally true. The body ceased to exist. It was gone. It was as if the departed stepped onto the train headed west and passed through the Carpathians and away forever. Soul departed. Spirit departed. Body departed.



## I Never Come Back

For the next two years my father worked the farm as he had been commanded. He worked mainly as a helper but gained skills and knowledge about the animals and crops that kept the family going. In those days the fields waited in the dew-wet mornings, for the plow, for the scythe the rake and wagon; the cows waited in the cool dewed mornings for the milking, for the feed, the opened door, and grazing grass; the chickens waited in the self-warmed coops for the hands underneath, for the feed, the unshut passages and sun-warmed bugs; my father waited in his lumped moist bed for the presunrise sounds, for the farmy breakfast, the invitation to work, and the saddle of the day splayed like a hog butchered to its back awaiting final cuts and icing down, waiting with spite and remorse watching through weather stained windows the farm turn on, turn out, the stations of the farm devotions, the stall, the slop, and coop, the sacrificial trees and bush of apples pears and berries, the vines, the hills, and stake-tied plants of grape and squash and peas; pumping water from hand-dug wells filling tubs and buckets; for horses, hogs, and chickens; geese and cows and ducks; water cooled in soil and sand in underlakes to burst in ponds and basements; logging trees for repairs and heat packing coal in bins; sending logs to sawyers and mills for planks and boards for braces and dowels; the loaders, the side-deliveries, the hay-rakes, the mowers, the pitchforks, the crow bars, the wheelbarrows, the wagons, the hitches, the harnesses, the feedbins, the haybarn; the smoothed neck posts, the milkcans, the creamcans, the pickling jars, the mason jars, the spades and shovels, the barbed wire; cooking on the coal range and the smell of it against scythed hay, picking fruit, picking tomatoes, picking corn, picking peas, picking squash, picking cucumbers; digging potatoes, digging carrots, digging onions, digging garlic; shucking, peeling, slicing, butchering; washing, rinsing, whitewashing, painting, scrubbing, scouring, swabbing, sweeping, folding, making; working the plow, spreading the manure, harrowing it in; planting, mowing, drying, baling, stacking; feeding cows, feeding pigs, feeding chickens, geese and all that, all that; passing time by talking and borrowed books; passing time by trips to the bridge, its river, and shaded lanes; passing time in old-country language, the stories of travel, and hints of love's messages; little time for dating and courting, kissing and holding, walking down dustpacked roads and whispers at night; little time for friends and girlfriends and townfriends; no time for himself alone but what time he could share with his work, his mind at work while his hands calloused and bled, while he began to grow old.

My father talked his brother into permitting him to return to the metalwork at least though not so much to the machine work. He was able to gain skills shaping and stamping metal, and earned in trade and rubles enough to supplement the farm's production, and though his brother would admit it only reluctantly, these little additional contributions, made mostly on bad-weather days and in the winter, were essential to the success—or probably more accurately—the survival of the family. But this didn't make my father feel better and useful; instead he ran through the list of chores he had to do every day, and that's the heart of the situation, I think. Even in his hospital bed that night I could see he hadn't quite figured it out. He was doing chores—as a boy would—and not working. He was not vital to the family, but merely its helper. He didn't feel like his unique talents were at the fore but instead hovered in the background, and only in his head.

Though in his mind it was all this work all the time, he came to know a man from Podilsky who would change his life.



One day I working pretty good in-the metal shop, maybe on Saturday and I talking with the boss talking about the girls and he say something like Olena what she look like under skirt or maybe on top under blouse—she pretty good. And I say I don't know she no let me see under her clothes like that. She listen to the priest and her mother see and well maybe I don't see nothing but I can tell you I do plenty feeling her in woods or in hay loft. And just then I hear a voice outside the shop and a man say I tell you what you finding a cow and lift her tail and you can take a look and you see ever thing you need to see my friend. It was Peter Kence.

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Peter Kence, you know him. He was one of the oldest friends your grandfather had. And don't raise your brows to me—you think I never heard a man talk about a woman's parts before? We were farmers. And I'm too old to worry about how I sound to anyone, even you.

My father was working in the metal shop and Peter Kence came down from Podilsky to commission some facing for his father's house. Nothing too big but he heard there was a shop down near Teremcy which didn't charge much for good work. When he heard my father talking about his girlfriend's mysterious regions, he started to joke about cows and pigs and how a farmer's son might get a more hands-on education behind the barn or out in the back field.

They talked all afternoon and Peter Kence decided not to head back to Poldilsky but instead went with my father to Teremcy and stayed in the barn on a blanket over the hay in the loft. They talked late into the night and I think that's when Peter Kence started telling my father about the changes he saw coming. The Bolsheviks—this was maybe before they were called that, but the revolution was starting to brew—the Bolsheviks were going to come and overthrow the tsarists in a workers' revolution. The Ukraine and Russia would change, and even now there were pockets of the new guard preparing for the day. Peter Kence explained that the Ukraine—even here in Teremcy—was the food-growing region for the Russians, and it wouldn't do for people to leave. So the forward thinkers—like Peter Kence and my father—would need to leave. And soon.

Peter Kence said he had hidden away enough for his passage, but he needed the right companion because even now the trip wasn't safe. Have you heard about America, Peter Kence asked. America is where we must go and start anew. The land is fertile like the steppes. Everyone has a chance to be president of the country. The old-country skills like fine metalwork were valued. All the important families in Podilsky and Lvov and Kiev had already sent their oldest sons to find a place to live, start working, and sending for the younger ones.

These Bolsheviks, he said, would not treat the tsarists well, and that included the peasants, like my father. Today, he said, a man like you can earn some rubles on the side, and you can hope to have your own farm someday even if you're not the oldest. But under the new political regime, such ambition would not be possible. You would still need to work the land as before, but your patron would be Lenin, and there would be no means for going beyond poverty. In America it would be different. We must go, he told Tatu, and the sooner the better. I've heard, Peter Kence said, that already they were purging those who could not learn to adapt. Rumors—maybe they were rumors, but the best families were telling them.

Even the Zahoruikos had sent their oldest son to America—Usten. He had found a town not far from Boston, which is the most advanced city in America. The Zahoruiko family were the chefs to the tsar once, and they had money and were powerful, and even though they were politically astute and mixed with peasants as friends, they had started their exodus, the new generation beginning to leave.

We must go, Powell, we must go soon. Find the money. You need 300 rubles that's all. I have found someone to take us. We must leave within the year.

Now I don't really know whether this was what Peter Kence told my father, or whether my father put this all together after he got here, but I know he came here with Peter Kence. The story he told me in the hospital that night was about that trip. And some of the facts of the trip are the same when Peter Kence tells it, so I believe it's true. And even if it isn't, it's the story my father told me the night he died, so it must have been a true story for him.

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My father didn't immediately agree to leave his family and home for a trip around the world to a country that sounded both appealing and frightening. He had heard there were different races there who fought all the time, that the country was filled with slaves who were like peasants but beaten every day—any mistake would set their patrons off. These slaves had a different color for their skin, and they came from a part of the world few had seen. But in Teremcy the schools were not good, and only sometimes did a newspaper from Podilsky happen into the village. News of the world and knowledge about the world came from people like Peter Kence who would come

to the villages for something inexpensive or to find fresh fruit and vegetables, or to find a fresh woman for a wife instead of the worldly city women who always wanted more.

Peter Kence came to Teremcy or to the metal shop every few weeks, and the two of them would drink and talk, play cards. Peter Kence would tell the stories he had heard and read about the new country. He sometimes would tell my father the stories from Usten Zahoruiko and the fortune he was starting to collect buying and selling land in a city near the Atlantic north of Boston. The land is fertile, Peter Kence would say, and they grow the same crops, they raise the same animals. They have farm machines that need repair. There are many Ukrainians there already.

Sometimes they walked through the hills or down to the river. My father probably thought the river was the way to America—so many boats passed downriver that it must flow to the sea and from there a ship could take them to Boston. They became friends.



Olena was busy too, working on her father's farm, mostly feeding the chickens, collecting and cleaning the eggs, and helping move the cows in and out of the barn and milking them morning and evening. She cooked too, but mostly the breads and cakes. But her specialty was pysanky—the decorated eggs. She learned the skill from my father's mother, who gave up making the pysanky after her husband died. She learned only a few of the patterns and memorized them, but Olena picked up on the technique and was making her own designs quickly.

She saved the most perfect white eggs, fertile eggs for making big families. She washed them and prepared the pysachok. The dyes she made from woadwaxen, onion skins, logwood and cochineal, the husks of sunflower seeds and the berries and bark of the elderberry bush. Walnut husks made black. She would buy mordant from the merchant who came to Teremcy once a year—to hold the dye on more strongly.

When it was night she would begin. The parts that would remain white she wrote on with melted wax. The dye would not stick to the wax and the rest of the egg would be dyed that first color—always a light color. The colors went on like to dark. First was yellow. Then she would write wax on the parts that would remain yellow, and the red dye would go on next. Then green, then blue, and finally black. Sometimes it took an hour for the dye to soak into the eggshell through the other layers of color. When this was done she'd carefully warm the egg by a candle to melt away the wax.

My father said she would give these eggs to different people or put them in special places for some purpose, like under the bee hive for better production of honey. Or to my grandfather's grave. And one of course to my father for special fertility and many sons. She told him she wished she had known how to make pysanky before his father died so he could have an egg with him in his coffin.

Olena's cows grazed the same hills as my father's, and they would meet during the week sometimes for lunch together. And in the summer when the sun was up later they would go to the pond and watch the sun set. They fell in love I'm sure, though he never said that to me. He told so many stories of them together in Teremcy.

He said one early evening in mid-summer they walked to the top of the highest hill with the best view of the river and hills to the West. They sat beneath the stunted oak and talked a while about the future, his dreams, and her dreams for him. After the sun had gone down and the cool air started to fall, they laid down, their hands by their faces as if in loose prayer, their faces close by each other's. They mingled their fingers and Olena laughed and said What are you doing, Pawlie? He didn't speak, he told me, and kissed her fingers one by one. He could see the fragile pink in the sky behind her face and the light layer of short hair on her cheek near her ears. Her eyes were the color of winter snow, a blue like the blue in the churches, with specks of green and yellow. He moved his body closer to hers and pushed his lips to hers and kissed her lightly the way his mother kissed him for bed when he was young. She moved toward him and opened her mouth and with her tongue she opened his lips so softly he didn't know it happened, and their mouths formed one space and she showed him how men and women kiss, not children.

He told me this, I think, because he wondered how she knew this. None of his friends had spoken of it, though they had spoken of many rough things men might do to women in the night. He said, though, they stayed like



this until the sky was dark and the air was almost cold.

I wish I could have seen it. My father like this. It was a perfect evening. A perfect night, I think.



And I was working. Seems everything's pretty good to me and I look out, go to the mountains, and I look when it's beautiful day and I see the train, oh, it must be 50 miles or more away, and I feel some day I take the train and never come back.

A boat was going, is big river. That boat was going, I say some time I take the boat and I never come back. And why do I say I never come back, I don't know.

## A Canvas You Never See

Olena was sitting in Nenyá's kitchen cutting cucumbers and carrots for a stew—she liked coming over to help so she could see Pawlie after he was done for the day and to make her case silently for becoming a daughter in the family. This was in mid-autumn—the trees had changed color and were starting to drop their leaves, and the nights were cold and the frost was starting to settle in. The cucumbers and carrots were from the cellar and the first thing they needed was the dry outer layers to be cut off—and these were fed to the pigs.

Nenyá was cutting some meat and next to her was a pile of small cubes of meat from a cow they had butchered at the end of summer. Nenyá was a quiet woman but could get talking when the mood hit her. Olena liked to talk about Pawlie, and Pawlie was the topic for discussion.

Pawlie. You like Pawlie and I can see why. He has good thick light hair and happy eyes sometimes. He took to his duty to the family well and does all the chores Pylyp tells him to. I'm not so young anymore and when I was a girl I fell in the loft and it turned my knee. See how my leg bends out to the side? *Hos podee pomilloi* how it hurts sometimes when it rains or in the winter. I cannot walk and the cooking is sometimes too much. I know, it's what a woman must do, but when I'm out of breath sometimes the pain in my knee gets too bad and I cannot stand over the stove for too long. I need a girl in the house—a girl like you, Olena—but all I have are two boys.

Now Pylyp is the man and he takes care of the important work and God doesn't expect him to do any woman's work, but Pawlie is the boy and he should help around the kitchen more. More like a girl—but don't tell him I said that. He tries but he'd rather walk in the woods or go up to the tops of the hills and watch the trains. I know sometimes he goes with you and if he were the man that would be what he should do. You know, to find a wife. You'd be a good wife to him. But you like Pawlie, don't you. He works hard, I think, but he needs to eat less fat—have you noticed? Of course you noticed; he has grown a little too stout in the shoulders and his belly is like a man who drinks too much beer. Well, I mean for a young man; he is not fat, though. But maybe a little.

I sent him down into the creamery to get some buttermilk and he said the shelf fell down somehow; he didn't know how. But I knew. I told him that but I said Well, I know but I won't tell you. It was his belly—it's too big for a boy his age. You must see it, no? No, of course not, love is a blindfold.

I was—yesterday I was cooking a chicken, and I wanted to keep the legs for a soup, and I was cutting the leg from the chicken, but the knife was not sharp and I couldn't cut the joint. Pawlie came in the kitchen was sitting over there and talking about the apples that could still be picked. And he could see I was trying to cut the leg and I said The knife is not sharp. And he said Nenyá I'll make the knife sharp tomorrow. And I was standing and my leg—my knee was like a knife in it and I said Pawlie can't you see your mother is too hurt to stand here and cut the leg from the chicken? I told him You know when I wake up sometimes I get a pain here, here between my *sisky* and it takes sometimes I count to 50 before I can stand, if my knee lets me stand. Something is wrong with my heart and someday you'll come in my bedroom and find me dead and my face gray from being dead all night. And even if I call you won't hear. You are like your father—you are lazy and you never help me. You are like the son to some other woman, some bitch who fucks my husband and has his bastard son—that's you because no son of mine would sit here and watch his own mother stand with a knife in her knee crying in pain and not help, not even stand up and say Mother please sit down and rest.

While my grandmother was yelling these complaints to Olena, Pawlie opened the door and walked over to Olena and touched her shoulder saying hello. My grandmother had her back turned to the door at that moment and kept on.

No, I must do it all while you sit there and dream. You think you're an artist or a sculptor of metal with your fancy stamps and projects for rich people in Podilsky, but your metalworking boss he told me you will never be more than a helper; you're too stupid to learn the difficult metal work. You are too lazy. You are too fat to even carrying wood to the stove. You pick one piece up and carry it when Pylyp would carry 5 or 6 pieces. Even Olena will carry more than you. Do you ever help without someone asking?

My grandmother turned and saw Pawlie.

No you never help unless someone asks. I ask in tears before you will work. You went to school for 3 years, but I tell my friends you went to school for only 1 year, you are so stupid, a stupid piece of dog's shit. I am ashamed for them to think I am your mother. God damn you. I wish you were never born. I wish you had died and not your father. Pylyp would be better off with a jack ass helping him instead of you. You are just a fat pig—we should butcher you and eat you for Christmas and not a pig we feed who does his job which is to be a pig and nothing more. You are supposed to be a man and instead you're a pig.

You see Olena here? She loves you, you know. You think she's a pretty girl but no pretty girl would ever love you. A mother can't love you. See the pain you cause, the pain in my chest. I'll die right here and right now to be rid of you. Get out! Get out you bitch's son!

Pawlie looked at his mother. Spit hung from her lip. While she moved from insult to hatred, her voice changed from human to something else. A demon—something from the parts of the bible where God is taking revenge. This was not a new thing for him. His mother was quiet most of the time, and attentive and loving toward him, being the younger son. But it seemed there were two of her within her head, and usually it was the calm mother, but sometimes—and now more often—it was the evil demon who found only faults, and as one was found, it was joined my another and the two made each worse and worse until they were the worst faults any person had ever had in the world, and then another would be found.

After his father died these insults were more frequent. Pawlie wondered whether his father had told her to keep them to himself, but then he would remember that his father never stopped his stream of criticisms, and his mother likely believed her husband spoke eloquently for them both. If they thought he was such a poor son, why didn't they give him up to the orphanage or another family, he sometimes wondered. If Pylyp weren't around anymore, he knew what he would do. He would wait until the worst storm and the animals were the most afraid and the barn in danger of being blown apart, and, in his dream of this, his mother would be telling him how lazy he was being and how a young boy could do better, and that would be the moment he chose to tell her, Mother, since you seem to believe anyone would be better off if I weren't here, I will give you that opportunity to be better off, and now I will go to the train and never come back.

He pictured her quiet after he said this. He knew she would never apologize. And she would act later as if the shouting and insults had never happened or that she had forgotten them. Her apology was simply that she stopped. Like the delicate, loving caress which is merely the whip held back.

He stood there a minute, his hand still on Olena's shoulder. Olena was looking up toward him but her face held no emotions except a blank shock. Pawlie looked from his mother to Olena without any changes on his face. He moved his hand to his head, brushed back the hair from his forehead, then walked to the door and out. Olena turned to the older woman but she was working at the meat, cutting each piece even smaller, but without any force of hate or anger, as if the black clouds that passed through her had been long forgotten. Maybe like an episode when she was a girl.

Olena saw Pawlie's mother's attention was on the knife, the meat, and her fingers; she put down her own knife, wiped her hands on her apron, stood, untied the apron and folded it over the back of the chair, and followed the path Pawlie had. When she was outside, it was still light, but the sun was down in the sky behind a thin cover of fog or mist that made the sky look like a kind of metal, as if it were one of Pawlie's stamped metal façades aged for years by the sea. She looked around and couldn't see him. She thought of calling but she knew he wouldn't answer.

She went around to the back of the barn, and behind there near the treeline was an old fence that used to keep the cows in a pen that was torn down years earlier. On the other side of the fence, Pawlie was standing with his hands by his sides looking into the woods, which were nearly black under the strange brown orange greyed-over sky. The scene didn't look real to her—it was like a smudge. Nothing was moving; no wind. If the sky were covered in a cloud, that cloud wasn't moving. The sky though simply looked like someone had dipped a paintbrush in muddy paint and had roughly painted a canvas. The sun was an irregular hole in the painting.

No sound, the only smell the rich acid of the shit mounds by the barn, the piss pooling underneath the stalls

in the cellar alcoves behind both of them. She listened for crying in case she needed to retreat and hide in the barn or even make her way home. But there was nothing.

She was wrong to believe there was nothing moving. Her eyes grew used to the foreign light and the indecent scene Pawlie's mother had created for them, and she saw that Pawlie's head was slowly turning from side to side, a rejection or a negation or a resignation. She felt this could be the most important moment in their lives. She played with different scenes to see which would make their lives be lives together. She had never heard a mother speak like that to her son, or a woman to any man or anyone at all like that before. She had not heard stories like that before, no even the stories of Baba Yaha or the myths of the mountains to the west. She knew anything she tried would be a guess, but even just standing here behind him, out of sight, out of hearing, out of his mind was also a choice—something he could remember some day and ascribe the wrong feelings to.

What would she need had her mother yelled at her like this with Pawlie in their kitchen? What would have made her walk so calmly out and stand like this? This was the puzzle whose solution would mean love versus goodbye.

I think she saw in his body and the way he stood there a deep sadness or regret. He was not thinking of Pawlie and Olena, or even Pawlie and his mother, but Pawlie as the shamed boy. He was not thinking, she must have thought, but just feeling. Maybe even dreaming. Or thinking how sad a Russian story this would make, how the men in the salon in Berlin would savor this story as one of deep passion. She knew Pawlie, I think, and she must have thought that he was savoring the moment and not trying to forget it or analyze it or find the right words to rebut his mother. She must not have thought the right next scene had her in it.

But maybe it was just the light, the sun light a dim light going out behind the barren trees. This was one of those moments—and you will experience them one day, Richie—where your guess about what to do will prove heroically right or heroically wrong. This choice in the path can't be retraced, taken back, forgotten. Olena must have felt this.

My father though, never saw this part of the story though. He told me of the last outburst he would tolerate from his mother, and how he walked out calmly to the edge of the woods and stood there until past when the sun was gone, until the darkness was as profound as a whisper you don't hear. He never told me Olena went after him, that she watched him from by the barn, that she wondered what she must do. He said when he returned to the kitchen, Olena was gone and his mother was in the bedroom asleep. There was a cool stew in a bowl with a towel over it by the stove on a small end table. He told me the sky had been a color he had never seen and would never see again. He said the air seemed to snap from an inner warmth to a dense cold, as if the moment marking the change between summer and winter had passed over him. This was the only story he ever told me where he said he loved Olena. But the love felt apart from the life of the woods and the river, of Teremcy. All he could say was I don't know.



The next day, Peter Kence stopped by the metal shop and he had details. He had a plan and had carried part of it out. He had money, papers, a bit of a hand-drawn map, and two handkerchiefs. Peter Kence rarely smiled, seemed like an animal that you would shoot and it would never change its expression until it had fallen dead. But Peter Kence knew what he and his new friend needed to do. He had a small notebook with addresses and names. He had the names of towns spelled out phonetically. He had the name of town in Germany. He had the name of a town in America. He had the name of a boat.

## Bridges

The plan was not ready for execution. Peter Kence still needed to find way to get from the state capital, Kamenetz-Podilsky to the Austro-Hungarian border. This gave my father the time to decide whether this was the right plan, whether he should stay and see how his life worked out or whether to head for America. Peter Kence didn't sugarcoat the risks of the plan—they were running away, and there were people who would try to stop them.

My father was encouraged to make the move because the previous summer he had been working on a nearby large wheat farm when he was offered the chance to make more money by gathering a crew of men to help with the harvesting while he took care of the thrashing machine, a large machine powered by a gasoline engine that would separate the grain from the stalks and husks. He found 19 men and they worked for 2 months and a week working a 300 acre wheat farm. The men would cut the wheat with a mower and dry it out. Then they would use a hayrake to make piles and my father would move the thrashing machine to each one. The men would feed the wheat into the machine which would deliver the wheat grain into a high-walled wagon. The machine was delicate, made by an English company, and my father spent a couple of hours every other day greasing it and adjusting its parts. The engine was finicky and he frequently had to clean the carburetor. Gasoline was not plentiful either, and sometimes they had to thrash by hand until the farm's owner could find more gas.

My father earned the equivalent of \$72 for his work, and each man he brought earned \$32. One day a man from the English company that made the machine came, visiting all the farmers who owned his company's machines. The Englishman watched my father working on the machine and then commented You're quite handy with this machine—he spoke in Russian—you should leave this country and move to England, or the United States. There are jobs for people with you who have talent with machines. Many people have had a hard time changing from farming with horses to farming with machines because they are not able to cope with the complexity of these things. You don't seem fazed by them; they seem like toys you've played with all your life. This part of the world will remain part of the past longer than almost everywhere else. My advice: Leave as soon as you can while you're still young.

My father spoke of that summer often; how warm it was, warmer than most summers—even though summers near Teremcy were warm every year, not much rain, not many cool nights. The work he did was harder than on the farm, and he felt lucky his brother allowed him to work off the farm for money and not barter. The family needed money more than it needed more livestock or more vegetables to buy a tractor and some newer farm implements, like a new mower and side delivery. There were some boys in town who wanted to learn farming and their families had sent them to the Sanuk farm to help and for a few rubles a week. Though they were inept, they were able to do the menial work my father typically did that time of year, later in the summer when the days were beginning to grow short and the sun shone a little less intensely.

I believe it was during that period—perhaps when the Englishman had spoken to him—that he decided he should leave, should run away.

But Olena.



His father had died 2 years earlier, and my father had grown to love Olena, I think. They spent many days together, and how could a young man not notice the attentions of a fine woman, and what kind of man would not be tempted by her?

Later that autumn, after the time on the wheat farm, my father took Olena to the river. There was a bridge there, one of the few. It had been built about 50 years earlier, and was an iron bridge that had rusted under its red paint. Its bed was a thick wood, and the whole bridge rattled when wagons or tractors went over it. They sat in a small meadow near one end of it. Olena had packed a basket of tea and pastries because she believed this could be the evening when my father proposed to her.

They arrived about 2 hours before sunset, and he sat down close to her and put his fingers into the hair at the



back of her head. He liked to bury his fingers in her hair, and this led to intimacy, to holding and kissing the times he had done it before.

Olena, he said, you know that I am fond of you. More than that. I love you and I want to make my life with you. But I can't do that until my brother had made part of his own family. I promised that to my father, and you urged me to accept that promise. I can't see how we can get married this way now. I have no land, no farm. I could only support us with metal work and contract farming, like I did with the wheat farm.

I have made a decision. It was not easy for me to do this. I hope you will see it as the right decision. Please hear me out before you think about it. Peter Kence has found a way for him and me to travel to America. He has found a place where we can live, and he has learned that many men go there and bring their families with them after a while. You can make money in America easy, and there is land that can be bought. He knows families in Podilsky whose sons have gone and now brothers and sisters and wives have joined them. I will go there with him, and when I have the money for you, you will come there too.

Olena said Peter Kence, Peter Kence, he's all you talk about. Maybe you love him and this is how you can run away together.

Don't be foolish. Peter Kence says Russia is going to change soon, and the Ukraine too. The Bolsheviks will overthrow the tsar and we will become slaves. We will all be peasants and the only one who won't will be the Bolshevik bosses. We will make wealth and they will take it from us. I must leave before this happens. Even now the border is hard to cross. It will be easier for women to cross later.

Olena heard my father telling her there was a life ahead for them together, but that life would be in a foreign place where she would have no friends and her family would stay behind. As he spoke she began to see, slowly, that his idea was maybe right for him, but she wasn't sure it was right for her. She couldn't let him just go, but she was not sure she could persuade him to stay. How could they live without their own farm. And if Peter Kence was right, the whole town and her family would be worse off than now, and she could not bear to think about that.

Olena said, Are you sure you will send for me? How will you do it? Will you come back?

I'll send money. I will send it to your father. It will only a few years. The Englishman from the thrashing machine company is certain I will do well in America.

Olena tried to imagine herself traveling so far, but she rarely left the village, had been to Podilsky only a few times, and it made her uneasy to make the trip by buggy. And the capital was frightening to her, how it was surrounded by the river and seemed like a place where war would come whenever it could. She didn't meeting new people, and in Teremcy she never needed to. But she could feel her desire to be with my father, her Pawlie. She turned toward him and leaned into his chest, and the two fell back on the ground. She kissed him and it was a familiar warm kiss. She felt herself needing him, and she could feel his body responding to her.

After a while the sun had gotten down near the tops of the trees, and a few buggies had crossed the bridge above them. Where they lay couldn't be seen from the bridge, and their near lovemaking had an edge to it. It felt wrong to be in the open like this so close to people passing by, but she felt drawn to it, as though her passion would grow beyond resistance by being seen by strangers.

When the shadows had crept up over them, my father resumed his campaign to convince her to leave.

Soon Peter Kence will have made all the arrangements. By the end of Christmas we should be able to leave, and by the spring I'll be in America. I can work all summer and send for you in the autumn. Just 1 year from now. I have saved all the money I need to get there—250 rubles. This is money my mother and brother don't know I have. I worked more metal stamping jobs, and I told them I made only \$32 like the other workers at the wheat farm. With the boys in the village, my mother and brother can make the farm work. He needs to find a way to earn money, or perhaps my mother can sell the clothes she makes or the rugs she braids from rags to earn money.

By then, Olena had closed her mind to the topic. She wanted things to go back to how they were, and the way she did that in her mind was to shut out problems and just live in the moment. She no longer thought about traveling across the world or Pawlie leaving, but instead just held him and put her fingers into his hair. Maybe this

was another one of his dreams, like the sitting room in Berlin where he would smoke and sip brandy after dinner discussing the latest novels with writers and painters. This dream sounded different, though. The dream had the two of them in a village like this one, but across the ocean away. In it he was still a farmer and a metal craftsman, and she was a wife and mother. It was a dream where only the problems of their lives right now had been removed. But to her, it was still a dream, and something she could put out of her mind for the next few hours.

She listened to the horses' hooves on the wooden planks on the bridge, the birds in the trees settling in for the night. She breathed in the cooling air and felt the slight breezes blowing over them. The warmth of the air was sometimes broken by a passing pocket of cool air or the wind, but always it would settle back into the warmth, and Pawlie's warmth under her reassured her that this talk was something to pass, and the world had gone back to how it should be.

Soon her calm breathing and the way they warmed each other on the grass brought them both to a light dozing. My father probably wasn't sure whether Olena had accepted his plan or had simply driven it from her mind. He too could let the arguments and unpleasantness of a moment fade away into the air and her touches. He knew that for her and for him, the truth and reality were like a room that you needed to step out of before you could fully inhabit it.

When they awoke an hour later, it was nearly dark. He reached under her sweater and blouse and found her breast. His hand couldn't fully hold it, and its tip was hard to his fingertips. She covered his mouth with hers and she thought that her body had captured him, and that even if he were to leave for America with that hated Peter Kence, Pawlie would soon turn around; or if he made it to America, he would plan his return or find a way to bring her quickly. She made just one step in the direction of his dream: She would accept that he would send for her, and she would think about nothing else but this true statement he made to her.

Together as if by signal they sat up and laughed to each other. They stood up and smoothed their clothes, hoping the smell of their lying together would go unnoticed in their kitchens under the smells of food cooking. The walk back took less than half an hour, and they would be only a little tardy, but their families were used to it, and they knew that the couple didn't put their families' schedules at the fore of their thinking.

Above, on the bridge, a horse pulling a buggy stopped and shook its head and snorted as horses do. Its master made a breathy clicking sound with his open mouth and snapped the reins onto the horse's back, and the horse started on again. Their progress homeward had paused only for a few seconds, but it was something the man sitting on the buggy bench would remember on the day he died.

## Train on a Snowy Day

The days till Christmas passed by as they do every year in Teremcy, but my father's plan made the end of Christmas seem to feel years away. He had told his family he was leaving for America, and though his mother argued and fought, in the end she admitted it was what she had expected of someone like him. His brother had grown confident he could handle the farm with the cheap labor provided by the boys in town, and besides, he had met a cousin of their neighbor, Semyon Scherbon, and she had begun to intrigue him during her visits.

Olena still had difficulty accepting the plan, but she would not let herself believe my father was going to disappear forever. He continued to tell her that his plan and promise was to bring her over in a year. She was the only woman he had ever been close to, and she had no reason to not believe him aside from his tendency to dream unrealistically. And the plan was so outrageous, she thought, that even if he did leave with Peter Kence in January, he would be back within a week. The Hungarian border was not far away, and her family had heard some of the same things Peter Kence had talked about—the border was not easy to cross, especially for those thought to be running away. Pawlie would be back if he ever left. The time between their talk at the bridge and Christmas was one in anticipation of an expected failure of a grand scheme, like a man who thought he's built a flying machine and on an importantly anticipated day he would mount it and fly off into the sky—but everyone

knows no such thing will happen, though no one is sure how the failure will go.

But Pawlie began acting on the plan. He asked Olena to make him two sets of clothes, one for him to wear and one to wrap in a blanket that he'd carry. She made him a special pair of socks with a hidden pocket for his money—it would be uncomfortable, but the money would be safe. He bartered for a small notebook and pencil to keep track of his trip and to hold the names and addresses he needed if he became separated from Peter Kence. He ate larger portions to fatten up expected there to be little to eat along the way. The trip should take about a month, Peter Kence had said, and the person in Peabody, Massachusetts, whose name he had gotten from his contacts helping arrange the trip would put them up and help them find work.

His mother's anger toward him grew every day, and sometimes she wouldn't even make him his meals, and those days he'd either cook himself, take a cold meal, or eat with Olena at her parents' house in the village. Olena tried to keep the plan out of her mind, and she was able to fill the days with close contact with my father. They'd walk through the woods, spend afternoons at the river, or climb the short hills to watch the trains and boats pass by down below.

My father told me about the old country many times. The air was clearer there than here—there were no factories then, and only woodsmoke would fill the air sometimes in winter. When he climbed the hills he could see very far away—maybe 50 miles. The weather was warmer than here, and it didn't rain as much. There was snow in the winter, but not as much as here. He said he ate many vegetables in the old country—onions and garlic, but they didn't smell the way they do here. And here people eat steak instead.

He and Olena spent many hours in the haybarn lying on a blanket in the hay, and I suppose they might have made love a few times. Olena viewed these months as her time being married to my father, she felt that close. From the start of the Christmas season they went to mass every day. The priest was certain he would conduct the marriage ceremony soon, even though he knew of Pawlie's plan. But like Olena, he knew Pawlie well enough to know he didn't have the heart—the bravery—to make the journey to America. He could hardly imagine the place, and all the books and newspapers he read about it, despite their enthusiasm, only convinced him that it was a dangers and uncivilized place, and that even were Pawlie to make it there, he would return soon.



On Christmas eve my grandmother prepared the traditional 12-food meal. They called it the Holy Evening. The most important dish was Kutia—cooked wheat and a special syrup containing diluted honey, grated poppy seeds, raisins, and walnuts. In the village they built a Christmas cave with a little manger and Jesus and Mary with strangers bringing gifts. The Sanuks had the traditional 4-legged sheaf of oats on their table wishing prosperity for the next year.

Holy Evening is not December 24, but January 6, and my father told me that the calendar they used then put January 6 around January 20 in ours. They ate well, and Olena spent the entire day and evening with Pawlie—most of the time outside the hut and in the barn in walking in the woods. Olena was glad to be with Pawlie so much that day, but she was fearful and anxious too.

Because early that day, Peter Kence had come to the village, and he said all the preparations were ready, and they would depart on the day after Christmas. He stayed with the Scherbons, whom his family knew well. My father had prepared his bundle and was ready to leave.

Olena left late on Holy Evening, and early the next morning she went to mass with my father. They sat near the back on the left side of the small church in Teremcy. They followed the mass with enough attention to not make a mistake, but both of them were anxious. Olena, I think—I believe this because I am a romantic and I believe I would have done this—said to herself vows of marriage during that mass. At the end she was crying, and the priest knew why and didn't speak to her of it. Her family sat on the other side of the church and looked over to her every few minutes.

After mass, she and Pawlie walked one last time to their spot in the meadow behind the back field. There they stood and held each other. They kissed, and both of them cried. They didn't speak because everything that had to be said had been said, and tomorrow morning he and Peter Kence would leave Teremcy. After she had kissed



them in their usual fashion—a passionate and wet kiss—she pulled his head to her, and kissed him lightly on each cheek and said, I will never stop loving you, Pawlie. Then she turned and walked back home, and in my mind I don't see her turning to look.

Richie, I suppose this is just something I made up. My father didn't talk about those days in this detail. That night in the hospital he told me more of the story than he had ever done before. The story of him and Olena, I mean. The story of his journey to the US—he had never told me that before. To understand him in Teremcy takes a lot of imagination, because I never knew him as a dreamer, and I can't easily imagine him as a tender lover. And so his stories about this are like stories I might read or see on TV. To picture him then sometimes I have to think about that movie, *Dr Zhivago*. Well, that just tells you about me, I guess.

But on the facts of the journey that started the next morning, he is clear.



Olena needed to spend Christmas day and night with her family. Pawlie needed to spend Christmas day and night with his, and double checking his pack and money sock. He likely spoke at length with his brother, and I guess his mother didn't let up on him. He also likely didn't sleep well.

When the day started to get light, it was under a heavy layer of clouds. It was snowing lightly, and the ground was just covered with a paper thin layer of white. My father was up before the lightening of the day, and he told me that his mother surprised him almost to death by cooking his favorite breakfast: bread soaked in eggs mixed with cream fried in a heavily buttered pan. It was a fried bread or a sort of toast. She surprised him also with her ability to observe and to figure out the small things that make a kitchen work well. She had separated out some of the egg whites and set them aside in a cup. When she was about to turn the bread over in the pan, she dumped the whites into the pan and laid the bread on top, so that the fried bread had patches of fried egg white on them. He cut the fried bread into 4 squares and ate them with his fingers, coating them with butter. He drank buttermilk with the meal. His mother must have noticed that when she didn't stir the eggs and cream well, these patches of fried egg white would remain on the toast, and that Pawlie would eat those parts last, and he always saved for last his favorite part of the meal. She figured out how to make the fried bread like this every time, but this was the first time she ever cooked it this way for him. She knew not to cook any meat with the meal—my father liked the fried bread that way, and that's how he would cook it for me.

She didn't talk to him while she was cooking nor while he was eating. She sat there looking at him, holding a towel in her hands and seeming to wipe her hands the whole time. Her face showed no sadness, but neither anger. It was passive and resigned, he thought.

She had made him 4 slices of fried bread, and just as he started the last, his brother came into the kitchen and sat down. Through the windows it was just light enough for them to see the snow coming down slowly, each flake spiralling down. The world outside was lightened on its top parts by the snow. A patch of the clouds to the east were lit like a curtain with a candle behind it.

No one spoke. My father's family is not a talking family. Yelling, yes; talking required a low but steady and long stream of energy they didn't like to waste when staring would do.

They sat there while my father finished his last breakfast in this little house, a hut really with a straw-thatched roof my father felt he should have re-thatched before he left.

His brother finally said Your favorite. To remember us by.



No one was awake when my father's mother awoke and started making kielbasa sandwiches from the Christmas meal leftovers. No one had noticed her put some of the meat away behind the stove while everyone else ate and talked. No one saw the extra loaf of bread she cooked before Holy Evening and which she wrapped in a towel.

She went out into the apple cellar and chose 4 good apples. She had saved some cooked potatoes. She wrapped up 4 sandwiches, the potatoes and apples in a small towel her son could use for washing on his journey. She

found a way to put the package in his bundle so he wouldn't notice. His book already added to its bulk. He had tied it with a small rope and made a small loop in the other end to be able to hold onto.

No one noticed when she blew out the candles and went back into bed after saying a prayer to Jesus and crossing herself.



My father was a nervous traveler sometimes, and after he ate without more than a kiss on his mother's cheeks and a hard handshake with his brother, he said Peter Kence will be here soon—I'll wait outside to make sure he finds the house.

He put on his coat and went outside. A few minutes later he could see Peter Kence walking up the hill toward the house. He carried a bundle like my father, and also a small bag over his shoulder where he must have been keeping their papers. They hugged quickly when they met, and turned quickly to head for the train. They could hear it whistling downriver, and though they started out running, the train would take 20 more minutes to reach the station in the village.

They were just about to go around the barn and down the path to the village when my father stopped and turned to face back toward the house. His mother and brother were standing there in their indoor clothes with the snow coming down onto their hair and shoulders. His brother looked firm but a bit sad—just the way you'd expect a Russian in *Zhivago* to look in the winter. His mother, though, seemed to have shrunk. Her shoulders were stooped, and her head was slung lower than he remembered. Her hair had been a golden brown all his life, but now he saw some gray in it. Had it been like this before? A hard thought came to him: when was the last time he had looked at her as his mother and not an ogre from a children's story?

Everyone waved, and my father turned with Peter Kence to run down the hill. His brother dressed himself in heavier clothes and went out to the barn to milk and feed the cows. His mother dressed herself in heavier clothes and went out to the coop to gather eggs and feed the chickens. Then it would be the pigs, the geese, the goats.

It was after all, just another winter day.



The conductor stopped to put a couple of lumps of coal in the firebox in their car. He adjusted the slots to bring in more air and also adjusted chimney damper to speed up the ignition of the coal and the warming of the compartment. He had his first passengers of the day.

Two rubles for the two of them was all it would take to get them to Kamenetz-Podilsky, the capital city of the state. By our calendar, it was January 21, and my father was starting out on his life's biggest journey. And as he did on all other trips, he left behind his anxiety once he was with his traveling companion.

He had asked enough details from Peter Kence to convince himself the plans were sensible, but he hadn't gone into a lot of detail. Kamenetz-Podilsky today. Tomorrow they head toward the border. In a few days they reach Lviv in Hungary. A while later it's a train to Hamburg, Germany. Then a boat to New York City. And then another boat to Boston. Peter Kence had talked of days of waiting, and some dangerous parts, and places where they would need to pay their money for passage. But my father didn't keep those details in his head. Peter Kence would lead the way.

He brought a book to read—a Tolstoy novel. You wouldn't think it, Richie, but books were abundant in Ukraine at the time, even in Teremcy. And he began to note the journey's details in his little notebook.

The train moved slowly through the farmland, moving slowly up from the river onto the steppes. The coal smoke would sometimes be blown into the compartment, and sometimes the engine's blacker smoke would blacken their view, but my father felt himself slowly settling into the trip. The difficulties and unknown future of the trip faded away and only the present or the next few hours and minutes occupied his thoughts. Just before they crested the ridge he thought of Olena and rushed out to the door at the back of the train. He stood on the platform there and looked for her parents' house down in the village which was about to disappear behind a stand of trees. The snow had let up, and he thought he saw it. The chimney was sending up a white thread of

smoke—this would be their morning warming and breakfast smoke. They cooked with wood not coal, and their smoke was gray or white.

He imagined her just waking, having heard the train's whistle as it left the village. She would be on her side under two or three heavy wool blankets and a goosedown comforter from the down of his farm's geese. She liked to sleep warm, and he remembered the few times they were able to warm up together in a bed covered with good blankets. The time her parents and brothers were away in Podilsky. He thought, though, I might be leaving, but soon she will join me in America, and we will have many nights and mornings together. I am filled with love, but the journey demands my attention.

Peter Kence came to the doorway and said, Goodbye lonely Teremcy. Say goodbye to your son, Powell Sanuk. Just then the train turned and the trees blocked the village from view. The river was gone too. My father said to me, And I never went back.

## Password

The ride to Kamenetz-Podilsky is only about 30 miles and only with a few stops, but the train was slow it took them about 3 hours to reach Podilsky. There were some stops to load milk cans, live chickens in portable cages, sides of beef, vegetables of all kinds, eggs, and wheat grain. My father and Peter Kence talked but the conversation was asymmetric. Peter Kence tried to tell my father all the details of the arrangements in case something happened to him on the trip, but my father paid attention only enough to not appear to rude or dull. Instead he looked out the dirty windows at the countryside slowly passing by. The snow picked up as they farther from the river, and soon there was enough that who countryside seemed white with only the trees and windbreaks adding contrast to the scene. The snow falling never seemed to gather enough thickness in the air to create a curtain between the train and the fields, but it had an effect like the impressionist paintings he had seen reproduced in magazines.

After an hour, and older woman with a cart came through the passenger compartment with a samovar of hot water with pot of concentrated hot tea on top. They bought a cup of tea and some cheese sandwiches. The conductor came back and sat down across the aisle from them—they were the only passengers on the train. He asked them whether they were headed to Kamenetz or were going farther.

Kamenetz, Peter Kence said. Powell and I are going to visit my family just outside the old town. I plan to show him the Peter and Paul Cathedral. And my friend here might be in the market for a wife, and so we plan to spend some time in the cafés and bars.

Right after Christmas—I'm not sure, my friends, this is the best time for hunting of that sort. Your friend looks to me to be a reluctant hunter of women. Are you sure he hasn't made promises back on the farm? Yes, of course I can see that you, friend, come from the city and he from the farm. His clothes, his hair, the dirt under his nails. He looks out the window as if he were planning the plowing. I've seen you on this train sometimes the last year or two.

Yes, arranging for metal work. My friend here is a metal craftsman—an expert in delicate stamping. And yes, his family has a farm.

Indeed. Well, gentlemen, we approach another farm stop—wheat this time, I think. Pass the time well.

Powell, Peter Kence said, when we arrive in Podilsky, we have an errand. We must pay our sled passage to a stopover not far from the Hungarian border. Then tomorrow we start.

My father acknowledged the task but he kept his eyes out the window. He had been on the train many times before, but the circumstances were different this time. Perhaps he would never see this country again and he wanted to remember it well. The snow wasn't what he wanted to remember, but it's what was there.

The loading shook the train, and it seemed to take longer than it should. Peter Kence was nervous that even this far from the border soldiers or guards would be looking for people running away. When the conductor returned to their car and slammed the door behind him, Peter Kence jumped and then laughed when he saw it was the conductor. My father just smiled. Usually Peter Kence is the calm one, but this trip was making him more nervous than my father remembers him ever being. Maybe this trip is more dangerous than he thought.

The train blew its whistle and lurched forward—starting, pausing, then starting it quickly. The drive wheels were slipping and catching. They were on an incline and the engineer had applied too much torque on the wheels at first.



The ride was like this all the way. As they approached Kamenetz the snow began to slow. The train couldn't go into the old part of the city because it was surrounded except on the west by a loop of the river, creating a natural fortress that had repelled conquerors for centuries.

The train stopped at a station about 2 miles from the city, and Peter Kence and my father started to walk. The city was large to my father, but it would prove to be a small city compared to what he would be seeing on the trip.

The buildings and streets were made of a local stone. The streets were bordered by tall, well-made stone walls—

not farmer's stone walls, but wall with cut stones. The houses and buildings were painted. My father noticed that as they walked toward the old town, the city started to look dramatic. On either side of them the deep canyon of the river began to close in on them. The river bed was wide and filled with trees. Ahead in the old town he could see towers and the onion bulb turrets of the cathedral. My father stopped to stare, and Peter Kence walked ahead about 20 paces before noticing. He turned

Powell, we are almost there. Down this street here.

They turned down a smaller street with cobbles. Narrow, the houses seemed on top of them. There were gutters in the street my father could not explain to himself. After 10 minutes on this street they turned onto an even smaller one and at its end they stopped in front of a blue door. Peter Kence knocked.

A man in his beaded holiday outfit answered the door, and quickly recognized Peter Kence.

Peter, my friend, come in. Is this the man you were speaking of?

One of them.

And you have the money?

Yes, here is 15 rubles for me, 15 for Fred, and Powell will pay his own. Powell?

My father was ready to pay the agent for the sled ride, but he hadn't heard of any Fred before.

Here is mine, and he handed over the coins.

The agent asked them to sit down and called to his wife to bring some tea.

Tomorrow morning, head northwest on the post road until you come to a group of houses just after the farm with the red door on the barn. There is small well there. Stop there and wait until the farmer comes out. He will tell you when to go. When he does, the first of you should start walking up the road in the same direction you were going. The next man should count to 100 twice and then start after. The last man should wait until the sled comes by and jump in.

My father said he was a little confused by this, but he said he was most surprised by the mention of a man named Fred. Peter Kence and the agent talked for a while, and when the agent's wife came out again to clear the cups, Peter Kence stood wished them a pleasant evening, saying they had some other errands to do before they were ready for the trip. The agent turned, then, to my father and said

Going to America! You will be joining many fellow Ukrainians there. Someday I hope my oldest son will go. The trips are starting to get more dangerous, but you should have no difficulties, only a journey to remember and to tell your grandchildren about. I envy you.

They walked out the door and onto the empty street now again beginning to whiten under snow falling more heavily.



They walked back to the main street through the city and all the while my father was wondering about the trip. He had heard some of these details, but hadn't really thought they were unusual the way Peter Kence had told them. But talking to this agent and hearing the stealthy nature of the start of the trip, he began to wonder how safe and normal the trip was. He had thought Peter Kence's stories about the Bolsheviks and the guards were exaggerations, but maybe they were exaggerated in the other direction—a mild version of what they were trying to do. Going to America or going to prison—these seemed like the alternatives at the moment.

He followed Peter Kence and after about 15 minutes he opened the door to a café and they went in. Peter Kence ordered turkish coffee, and my father did too.

Who is Fred?

Fred's a friend of my cousin, Fred Burrowick. I didn't want to tell you his name before in case the police were looking for people trying to run away. He's a little older than us, and he has all the money he needs. We'll meet up with him at the well tomorrow morning. You'll like him. You need to know enough so that if something happens to me you can get to America on your own, but the less you know, the better.

Are there any others coming with us?

Not with us, exactly, but once we get to Hungary, we'll be in a larger group. This agent we talked to today.



He's part of a group of agents who help people get to America. It took me a long time to find an agent I could trust—so many of them are just plain crooked. I've heard stories, and even some people from my school who tried to leave came back after a few months and said they had been stuck in a town in Hungary. Let's finish our coffee and head to my parents' place. We need to get a good sleep.

My father looked around the café. Every table was occupied. Most people who were alone were reading newspapers or a book. The women wore scarves on their heads and some had gaudy jewelry. Glass necklaces, white lace gloves. This was a rich part of town, he thought. People here owned the farms the peasants worked. Peasants seemed like the wrong word, but he couldn't think of a better one. Perhaps he was a Bolshevik in his heart.

The people in the café were older than he was except for one woman who seemed just a little younger. She wore a black hat with dark netting in the front, and the scarf around her neck was a bright silk with cobalt and ruby designs. She had bright red lipstick and smiled wanly when she saw him looking at her.

Peter Kence said, I'm ready. Let's go.

My father gulped one last gulp of the thick coffee and they got their coats on and left the café. It was snowing heavily outside, and they headed down a series of ever smaller streets until they came to a 3 story house painted a bright yellow with grey trim. He could see lights inside—they had electricity.

Peter Kence knocked on the door and then used his key to let them in. They shook off the snow outside on the entrance stone and stamped their feet. Inside was a small room where they took off and hung their coats and hats, and they removed their shoes and placed them on a wooden drying rack. There were several well-made coats, some looking like they came from the west. Perhaps Vienna or Berlin. These were cities my father knew of as centers of fashion that supplied finery to the cities of the Ukraine. Tsarists, he thought.

A short, quite fat woman with dyed hair came from the kitchen and kissed Peter Kence. Greetings, she said. Peter Kence introduced his mother to my father.

Good to meet you, Powell Sanuk. I've heard your name from Petra, and I understand you two are headed for America tomorrow!

The way she inclined her voice it was clear that *tomorrow* was the news she was emphasizing.

A short man in a brown suit and vest came from another room, and Peter Kence introduced his father. After a few minutes of unimportant talk, they moved into a brightly lit room with dinner settings for everyone, including my father.

After protesting the need for such opulence, my father sat down and looked slowly from Peter Kence to his mother and finally to his father. Peter Kence was from a rich family. Why did he wish to go to America? Was it ideological? Political? There seemed to be no anger between him and his parents, so it couldn't be a rebellion. And why would Peter Kence be inclined to find a poor farm boy like him to go with him?

And you, Mr Sanuk, what did you do in Teremcy?

I helped with my mother's farm. I was helping my older brother, really.

And he is an accomplished metal smith, Peter Kence said. You know Mr Zahoruiko's studio? Powell made the metal decoration above the doorway.

Really? That's good work. No need to be modest. Do you aspire to be an artist?

No, Powell is a humble man and is looking to better himself and his family but going to America. He shares with me a love of freedom and opportunity.

You're free here, and every opportunity is available to you.

Not if the Bolsheviks take over the country. You will find yourself among the poor and destitute if that happens, father.

Silly, the tsar is too strong for that. And besides the Bolsheviks are a Russian problem, not a Ukrainian one.

The discussion went on. My father ate the borsch, the stuffed cabbage, and the pork. He listened. He had never heard a family discussion like this. They talked about politics, he assumed, but none of the details were familiar to him. When he read a newspaper, he was drawn to the articles about books and art. He liked the drawings, and the stories about how the future might unfold. But he avoided the political pages.

After dinner, Peter Kence's mother brought out an excellent tea and some lightly sweet pastries. She mentioned that they and Peter had talked about his trip to America for many days and had come to accept that we would do it. They insisted on two things, though, she said. First that he earn the money he needed for the trip himself by working. And second that he find some traveling companions. My father told me he couldn't imagine what sort of work Peter Kence could do in Podilsky to earn rubles—he didn't seem to have any skills beyond the ability to talk about politics and what clay before them in America. Was he a teacher? An editor?

It turned out, my father found out years later, that Peter Kence was a broker. He paid craftsmen in small towns a fair price for their work—like my father's metal stamping—and charged people in Podilsky quite a bit more to deliver that work to them. He transmitted the details of the work that they wished to have done, and delivered the pieces. A middleman, of some kind. My father had never heard of anything like that before. And to think this was only Kamenetz-Podilsky and not a real city like Lviv, Kiev, Berlin, or London. What sorts of occupations were in those cities?

Mr Kence took them into a room with a large, porcelain fire box that was as warm as his mother's kitchen with the fire full stoked. Mr Kence brought out a bottle of brown liquid and poured a small amount into tiny glasses for the men to sip. My father sipped and almost vomited.

Whiskey. From Scotland—a country to the north of England. They say it can be made passably on a well-equipped farm if need be. You don't have such alcohol on your farm, Mr Sanuk?

We are able to get something like it from the other farmers, but my father—who passed away a few years ago—didn't approve of such drinking.

It makes life more tolerable, Mr Sanuk. Don't disparage it until you've felt the need for release after a difficult week or month and experienced its magic.

I've been drunk, Mr Kence, if that's what you mean.

Not exactly. But it will do for the moment.



My father had never slept in a city bed before. He had a room to himself and a pot to do *choonies* in, and just downstairs and out the back door was a room for *apootch*. He had a pitcher of water, a small basin, and a glass. The bed was covered in a linen with good wool blankets and what they called a comforter on top. The pillows were filled with goose down.

He had been in Podilsky before, but never in the winter, and only once did he spend the night. The snow in the city softened the light and muted the sounds of horses and dishes clattering, the footfalls of new leather shoes on the cobbles. Coal and woodsmoke hung low over the city, and it made breathing a little difficult. He had fallen into an alien world. The Kences were not like any family he had met before. And the cold Peter Kence seemed now like a changeling to him, like the ones in the stories his grandmother had told him when he was little.

The trip, which seemed so simple and innocent when Peter Kence had explained it, now seemed like a Russian epic. And Peter Kence's parents seemed to look on the trip as a child's foolish play time. They would permit their son to try it for himself, but he would soon learn and return to his normal life. Teremcy, his mother and brother, the farm, and Olena seemed like a different life that he had led and passed away from, as if this were the afterlife they would have and not the Kingdom of Heaven the priests taught him.

He undressed and used the basin as explained to wash his face before getting under the covers. There was a string that hung down from the light above his bed, and he pulled it to turn off the light. He had never seen electricity at work, though he had heard about it and read about it. Would America be like this? Would he be one of the rich there?

He turned onto his side and pulled his knees up toward his chest. He tried to make a picture of Olena in his mind—a picture of her in this bed with him, her hair spread on the down pillows. This was the kind of bed she would like. He tried to imagine her lying there facing him, her hands up to her face and his face near hers. He saw brief glimpses of her when he tried to conjure her image, but they would not hold. He tried to get pictures in his mind of his mother, and his brother. But these would not hold either.

He thought of the agent telling him about how to get on the sled. The counting. The hiding near the well. And the handkerchiefs. Peter Kence had given him a handkerchief when they had finally agreed to travel to America together. Peter Kence called it their *password*. Their *parole*. What did it mean, he had asked. It's the word we use or the sign we show to tell those along the way to America who have agreed to help us run away that we have paid for our passage and to let us pass safely. It's a secret symbol that identifies us as travelers under their protection. Without the password, we might be harmed or turned into the guards or police. It's a sign that we are friends and to be trusted.

And the agent spoke of the password, reminded Peter Kence of it. Peter Kence pulled his handkerchief out of his coat pocket and held it up to the agent and said, Handkerchief. He asked my father to do the same, and he did.

This didn't sound like part of a normal trip to him. It sounded like something that would happen in a war. Maybe it was a way to tell a friend from an enemy. Forgetting this password could mean imprisonment. Or death.

My father started to cry. He was afraid, and I think he wanted to return to Teremcy. He could find his way back to the train and be home by tomorrow night. Peter Kence would be disappointed, but he would be safe. He could be with Olena again right away. She didn't believe he would really make it all the way to America. But they would know he didn't have the courage. He could imagine his mother saying one day, I knew you were not a man; I knew you couldn't make it to America.

He was warm now in this city bed under the watchful eyes of the elegant Kence family, but tomorrow he knew it would be cold. They would walk in the cold and wet to a small village and wait for a sled to take them—where? Toward the Hungarian border. He imagined pulling out his handkerchief and waving it like a flag: Help me, here is my password. Help me get to America.

He stopped crying and he started to dream of his sitting room in Berlin and his friends speaking of literature. He fell asleep as the snow fell outside his window.



Richie, you don't know how hard it was for my father to tell me this part of the story. He had never shown me any weak side of himself before. He stopped at this point for a few minutes. He looked out the hospital window and closed his eyes to let the cool air pulled in the by fan cool his head. He continued to move his legs to try to find a comfortable position, but it seemed nothing worked. I asked him if he wanted another ice chip, and he said he did.

A nurse stopped outside the door, her hand on the jamb: Everything ok, Mr Sanuk?

Ever thing ok over here. I doing pretty good I think. This my daughter Helen. I tell her story I come to America. I think maybe I not be around too long and I want her know how I come here.

Ok, Mr Sanuk. But you should be hopeful. You should believe you'll go home.

I could see my father was pretending to listen and to believe her, but I don't think he did. I wanted to believe, right at that moment, that he would be ok. The story seemed important to him, so I listened to it. But truth be told, I didn't try to memorize it. I have a good memory, and after he died, I tried to piece it back together again. I didn't have all the pieces, and for those places I tried to take parts of his other stories of the old country and use them to plug the gaps. And there were the stories my mother told, and Sam Scherbon, who came over later much the same way.

A story like this is a way to understand. My father's trip to the United States, and how to grew to be what he had become is a mystery, and this story I'm telling you is my best explanation for that mystery. It might not all be true, but it's the best I can remember and the best fill ins I can come up with.

My father just looked out the window for a while. It seemed like he was looking at something important, or as if he were watching someone approaching the hospital. He wasn't dreamy, he was intent. Intense. His eyes were moving, and it seemed like he was cocking his head to hear better. He worked his mouth on the chips of ice. I could tell the pain was coming in waves, and he kept moving his legs.



Peter Kence still alive. He live in Los Angeles now. He turn 51 two weeks ago. No, last week. You know he write me letter ever Christmas over here. Not Ukrainian Christmas but American Christmas. He never talk about our trip. He doing pretty good. He still marry. He have 3 children. Last he over here you 9 years old. We got out ina woods and pick mushroom like we have in Ukraine. He pretend he farmer like me and he pick ever mushroom ina woods and put it in bucket. Cookem up he tell me and you mother. We try throw out bad ones but he say No just cookem up I eat alla them. So we cookem all up and he eat. He never get sick nothing. Ever time he come to my farm he do same thing. Then he go back Los Angeles. He wear funny shirt and his wife she have dark glasses. He looking at my farm he say sometime Like old country.

Then he was silent again. He had a tube coming out from under his covers. It was attached to a bag, a rubber bag. The nurse would come in sometimes and take it away and replace it with another one. The bag she took had some liquid in it, I could tell. My father would watch the nurse closely as she did this. He watched her walk out the door. He listened to her footsteps as she walked down the hallway. And he would stop paying attention when he heard a door close.



They tell a story about Kamenetz-Podilsky. The Smortrych River which runs around it in a loop forms a natural fortress, and the city seems to stand apart on a high, sheer walled island in the Ukraine. In 1621, the Sultan Osman came to conquer the city, and when he saw it he asked, Who built this invincible town? His advisors answered, God. And the Sultan said, And so I will leave it for God to conquer. And he retreated.

## Friend Tall Man

He was walking toward the window to check the weather when he heard the knocking. It seemed to be coming from the door but when he went over to open it, the knocking—which had continued incessantly the whole time—seemed to be coming from the dresser. He walked there and saw the bedroom door in the mirror. He reached for the doorknob in the mirror, and he saw his hand and arm shrink and stretch reaching toward it. Then he gripped the knob and opened it. He saw the outline of a man...and then he woke up with a sudden spasm. As he woke it felt as if his head were being pushed through a small opening, as if the process of waking was not one purely of consciousness, but also a sort of birth. It took a few seconds before he could open his eyes and see.

Looking around, he saw he was in Olena's parents' bedroom. He was warm under the blankets, and then he thought he could smell Olena. He turned over and he saw her light hair played out on her feather pillow. He reached over and pushed down the feather comforter until he could just feel her shoulder. She turned over and smiled at him. He remembered they had gotten married just yesterday, and he began to feel himself getting ready for her. The knocking had not stopped. It must have been a part of the real world that had snuck into his dream, and now he wondered where it came from. The bedroom doorway had just a thick curtain over it, and the sound was a knocking on a door. The knocking seemed to move around the room, coming from the doorway, then from the wall behind the bed, and then around and around the room—to the ceiling and to the floor.

Olena said, Pawlie, what's wrong? What are you looking for?

The knocking got louder and louder—he wondered who would disturb their first married morning together like this. The knocking settled on the wall behind the bed, and he reached out toward it, as to open a door...and then he woke up with another sudden spasm. Again it felt as if his head were being pushed out through something. He lay there until his head was clear. He felt warm—hot. He was sweating. It was dark in the room, and looking out the window he saw it was dark outside too.

Sanuk! Wake up.

It was Peter Kence. He was in bed in their home in Podilsky. It was the day of the start of their trip.

My father dressed quickly and went downstairs. There were some pieces of bread and jam on the table, and a pot of hot tea. Eat quick, Peter Kence said. While my father ate, Peter Kence went upstairs, and my father could hear him jostling around a room up there. Opening drawers and closing them; opening doors and closing them. He buttered the bread and spread some grape jam on it. The bread was thick and dark, a kind of rye he thought. But it didn't seem as rough and homemade as the bread at the farm or at Olena's. It seemed fresh and from a bakery. He ate quickly but so he'd not get sick. He noticed the dining room for the first time—last night there were too many things to pay attention to to notice any of them deeply. There was a chandelier—he knew this from descriptions in books—he had never seen one. And the walls were covered by some sort of decorative paper, a wallpaper with small pink flowers with light blue lacework all around. The pattern repeated, so he was certain it was wallpaper.

The cups and small plates had a similar design, and were light, not like the plates at home which seemed made in a blacksmith's kiln. The forks and spoons were small with a pattern stamped into them. He looked at the pattern carefully and wondered whether it was from a special tool with this pattern on it or a craftsman had used standard punches.

Peter Kence came bounding down the stairs. He had changed clothes and had a roll like my father's under his arm. Peter Kence was from a rich family, my father had finally figured out. They stood to lose a lot if Peter Kence's feared—and loathed?—Bolsheviks came to power. My father hadn't feared them because he was already poor and what more could happen?

Peter Kence was a stern looking man. His head was shaped like a block and wide. His eyes were wideset under thick dark brows. His lips were on the thick side, and he rarely smiled. His ears were set close to his head, and his black hair was cut close to his head. He had a high forehead. His skin wasn't smooth, but it seemed like he

had had some sort of pox as a child. There were photos of him in the sitting room, and my father remembers Peter Kence was wearing a well-tailored tweed wool suit with a buttoned vest, a diamond-spotted tie, and a striped shirt with a very thick collar. The stripes on the shirt ran up and down, but on the collar they were horizontal and much lighter. He remembered two pins or decorations. One was a kind of butterfly or tied ribbon, like a bowtie, and this was on his right lapel. Above one of his vest buttons he had a pin in the shape of a cross with some sort of crest in the center. It had a metal chain that disappeared under this coat and apparently into a breast pocket—a watch probably.

My father remembers these details because I've seen the picture myself. It was among my father's things—I found it in a metal box in the cellar. I don't know how he got it. There was second picture of Peter Kence. It like the other was posed. He his standing in front of a photographer's curtain, and he has his hands in the pockets of a pair of workman's coveralls. He has a slavic-looking, square face—again not smiling. He's wearing a flat cap—you know, the kind a sportsman wears. It isn't until you look closely at this picture that you notice that Peter Kence is wearing a buttoned, ribbed sweater with a light-colored shirt with a tie that looks to be about the same color as the shirt. The shirt's lapels are wide in this photo too. The coveralls seem like a joke in the photo.

Peter Kence was about 6 inches shorter than my father.

Onward! Peter Kence commanded.

My father finished his small breakfast, sipped one last time his tea, grabbed his coat and bundle, and without any fanfare they were outside. It was dark and no longer snowing, but it seemed like they had gotten almost a foot of snow.

Which way, my father said.

This, said Peter Kence, and with that he heard a horse coming down the passage along the side of the house. It was Mr Kence on a small buggy.

We ride in style out of town, but we cannot go all the way this way. We need to walk into the little village. Peter Kence announced this.

My father was up on the buggy with Peter Kence on the other side of his father. The little buggy seemed to slide through the streets of Podilsky, its wheels sometimes not turning fast enough for how fast they were traveling. They need grease, my father thought. They moved quickly once they got on the main road out of town, toward the northwest. Soon they were in the countryside, which was broad fields with windbreaks and stands of trees separating the fields. The woods were like in Teremcy—or here, even—with thick hardwood with thick underbrush where the growth was new. Stands of fir and pines stood above the hardwoods, and under them the needles formed a thick, soft blanket. My father would lie under pines in Teremcy and in Merrimac. The fields were covered in fresh snow, but stubs of crops stood up irregularly in places. Sometimes stones were visible above the snow, too.

When they passed farmhouses, the didn't see any smoke from the chimneys or the smoke was thin and slow—this meant it was too early for the farmers to get up. Early indeed.

After 30 minutes, the buggy stopped, and Mr Kence said, You must walk from here. It's 2 miles up the road. See that light up there? That's where you're headed.

My father wondered whose plan was being executed: Peter Kence's plan or Mr Kence's?

My father walked to the back of the buggy and got his bundle. He waited there looking out to the fields in the darkness, the snowy fields lit by the Milky Way and stars in the breaks in the clouds and nothing more. He thought the Kence men were saying their goodbyes, and he didn't want to disturb them or cut it short.

After a few minutes, Peter Kence said, We're off, Tatu. I'll write when we get to America.

Peter Kence and my father stood by the side of the road watching Mr Kence get the buggy around and then head back to Podilsky. They watched until they could no longer see the dark buggy against the white snow. They watched for about 10 minutes.



They walked silently. The snow was deep enough to make walking difficult, but other buggys and sleds had

been by during the night, and there were two ruts in the road. They each walked in their own. My father kept his eyes down but would look up to the light he saw in the distance, trying to gauge their progress. After 30 minutes he saw the light being blocked now and then, and realized they were coming at it at an angle, and now some trees were in the way—not a deep stand, more like a windbreak. After another 15 minutes they started to see the outlines of a few other houses and barns. Behind them the sky was starting to lighten. Clouds had crept up and were blocking the starlight they had used before to see their way.

Not long after that they came into a small cluster of buildings. It looked like two farms one across the road from the other. Off to the left—kind of to the south—there was a stand of what looked like maples and birch with a couple of shading pines in their midst. Just near that was a dug well with a stone wall around the shaft. A hand pump stood above a wooden lid over the well, and they took a quick drink and filled their canteens.

They were startled when they saw part of the woods start to move, and it was a man who had been standing under the pines.

Hello, friends, said a voice my father didn't recognize.

Hello, Fred, Peter Kence said.

Powell, this is Fred and Fred, this is Powell. We will all be traveling together.

Fred was taller than Peter Kence who was short, but shorter than my father. He was very thin and wore a brown coat, brown pants, and a brown flat cap. My father said he wore a similar outfit, but at least his coat was a lighter color than his hat and pants, and he wore a mouton sheepskin hat, a traditional Russian hat designed for winter—the kind with an outer shell and fur brim and fur ear flaps. It had ties that either held the ear flaps up on the head, or tied under the chin to keep the ears warm. Peter Kence had the same kind of hat, and his coat and pants were very dark, and his coat was fur lined.

They were cold by the well, so they didn't say much. After about 20 minutes they saw a man come out of the barn across the road from them. He was a large man, as tall as my father and maybe 100 pounds heavier.

He said, Password?

And Peter Kence reached quickly into his coat pocket and pulled out a linen handkerchief.

Good, the man said. Ok, here is how you use the password. Do you all have a handkerchief like this?

They all did and showed them to him.

Good. You should never say the word *handkerchief* to anyone who wants the password. You must show the password to everyone who will give you a ride—on a wagon, on a sled, on a train—and any guards or police who approach you unless someone before that has told you to do something special for that guard. If you approach someone and are not certain whether you need to show the password, take out your handkerchief and wipe your nose or something. That will be all you need. Now, don't all of you pull out your handkerchiefs—that will raise suspicions. If are alone, then show it. If you are with one of the others...let's see, you're all different heights—the tallest shows the handkerchief. Undertstand?

They did.

That's you—the man turned to my father. Now don't tell me your names. I don't care about your names and the less I know and the less you know the better. Here is what we do now. You, friend short man. After I get back to the barn, you will start walking up this road in the same direction you came. Then you, friend middle man. You count to 100 twice—can you do that?—count slowly, then start after him. And you, tall man, you wait here. When the sled comes up the road in that same direction, you jump on. It's a hay wagon. Get under the hay so no one can see you. Then, Mr Middle Man, when the sled passes you, you jump in and get under the hay. And finally you, Short Man, you do the same. Understand?

They did.

*Xorosho. Ohchen xorosho.* Now, my wife will be up soon, so I'm heading back into the barn to milk the cows. Good luck getting to...where are you headed, my friends?

America, Peter Kence said.

America. Yes, America. Where else. Well good luck with your trip and the rest of you lives. Take a look

around. You will see your motherland today and some of tomorrow. Then you cross the border. Perhaps you will never see her again. Never see you first love ever again.



He walked away with a heavy step through the snow and into the barn. Peter Kence looked at Fred and my father and said he was off. He started up the road. After a minute he turned and looked back—maybe he was expecting the sled. He disappeared over a small rise when Fred got to 100 the second time. He counted slowly—whether by instruction or because he couldn't count so well, my father couldn't tell. The Fred started up the road.

My father retreated to the pines to be less visible in case other men started working on the farms. This side didn't look like a dairy operation to him, so he didn't they would get up soon. And he had met the farmer across the road. But he wanted to stay hidden.

He watched the road back toward Podilsky. His feet were getting wet and cold. It wasn't snowing, but it was cloudy and the wind had picked up. He had started to count, just as Fred had, but he gave up after 5 times to 100. He thought about just heading back to Podilsky on foot. Fred was over the rise, and maybe a couple of miles away by then. But he was the password man. He was Mr Tall Man. Olena would still be in her bed, waiting for her mother to stoke the stove fire to warm the house. Their house had thick walls and a very heavy thatch, and it would grow very warm when the fire was going. They had some small fireboxes in each room in case the winter was especially bad. He wanted to be in that bed with her, under those blankets and the down comforter. But if he went back, it would be to his farm, and his angry mother and demanding brother. There was no future for him there. There was nothing for him here but Olena, and he would send for her.

He was in a reverie and almost didn't see the sled coming up the road. But he had turned when it was still 100 yards down the road. He stepped out from under the pines and pumped another stroke of water into the bucket and took a drink. He didn't know how long the ride would be, so he wanted to have water. And this made him seem less of a danger to the driver, who was sitting high up on the sled.

It was really a hay wagon with 4 long, thick runners. The 2 in back were fixed but supported by leaf springs. The front runners were on a rotating wheel that made it easier to turn. The runners were thick wood with iron attached by bolts up through the wood. As the sled approached, he could see that the iron runners were still rusty, so this must be the first run of the winter for this sled.

From the stand of woods he heard a crow cawing. Then he saw the black bird lift into the sky, make a turn around my father looking down at him, and then he flapped off parallel to the road in the direction Peter Kence was walking.

It was filled about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the way with hay, and near the front were some bales tied with baling string. He saw that they were placed irregularly with substantial gaps—careless farmer, my father thought. When the sled was about 25 feet away, my father pulled out his handkerchief, took off his hat, and wiped his head and forehead, wiped his eyes, and pinched his nose with the handkerchief between his fingers. He put the handkerchief away, put his hat back on, and looked up at the driver, who nodded his head as slightly as anyone could do. The sled passed, and my father jumped on the back. He pulled aside the hay and wiggled down into it, and pulled hay over him so that only his eyes and maybe part of his hat were visible. He wasn't sure.

This sled would take him to America.



## Yellow Holes in the Snow

The sled had 3 tall sides and a back gate that was open. The hay was about 4 or 5 feet deep in the middle, and in the front—near where the driver sat—there were half a dozen small, hand-tied bales of hay. My father was under enough hay that he could feel himself warming up. His first inclination was to fall asleep—his sudden awakening through a couple layers of sleep meant he had not thoroughly rested for the night. The sky was lightening, but the clouds were smeared across the sky painting it a blue-grey except for the sky to the southeast, back toward Podilsky, which was a pewter pink with a deep red center.

The sleds runners were wider than the ruts in the road, and the wagon would jerk from side to side as first one of the runners caught a rut and then a runner on the other side would. He could smell the horses sweating from the effort of pulling the loaded sled up the small hill. Behind him the farmhouse where the man had spoken to them spouted a thread of white smoke—the man's wife was up.

My father had a hard time staying awake. Then a man reached onto the side post at the back of the wagon and spun himself up onto the hay. It was Fred.

Powell, he said.

Shh. Get under the hay quick.

Fred dug himself under the hay next to my father and the wagon had never stopped. They rode in silence because the two men didn't know each other at all. Sometimes a couple of snowflakes would come down, and the sky got a little lighter and they could see the wide expanses of farmland and the rolling countryside.

Then Peter Kence grabbed onto the post and climbed onto the hay wagon. He sat on the hay and didn't cover himself over.

Get under the hay, my father said.

In a few minutes. I've been walking for a long time up this hill, and it's not so easy in the snow and ruts. He took some of the hay and cleaned the mud off his boots. My father could see that Peter Kence had been sweating. When his boots were clean he drew some of the hay over him, but he wasn't buried that way my Father and Fred were.

Fred's a glazier. To get passage with a legitimate agent I needed to assure them that we were all men with talents who would bring our families with us once we were established. I told them you were a metal craftsman, and that I was a machinist. My father believed every man should have a trade to fall back on regardless of their station in life.

Glazier?, my father said.

Yes sir, Fred spoke. I cut glass for windows and install it. Sometimes I reshape the glass so I use a torch to melt it and reshape it. Sometimes I install stamped metal around the windows and under the eaves of a peaked roof. I suppose I might have installed one of your pieces, Powell. I did a job for a man that Peter Kence arranged, and he brought some metal from a town to the south. Could have been yours.

Yes, it might have been. How do you know Peter?

He courted my sister. She had the sense to stop seeing him after a few weeks, but Peter and I struck up a conversation about the Bolsheviks once, and we went off to the tea house to wait. My sister was out shopping when Peter arrived—he likes to arrive early. I thought it was bullshit, but then he started talking about America and the opportunities for a glass man there. I wasn't going anywhere in Podilsky, and I wasn't interested in Kiev or Moscow. I thought why not.

His sister is a fat cow, but she let me put my hands under her bobbies when I sat behind her in the woods. Nothing lower, though. And she was half a foot taller than me.

They say we have some Lithuanian blood in our family somewhere.

Mine's French. My father's actually French, but he moved here when he was young. Married a Polish woman, and made it big in women's apparel. Then he bought some farmland. Down near Teremcy, Powell. Maybe even he owns the land your family works. He told me one of his tenant families had a lazy son. Could be you.

This was the first time my father saw Peter animated, talking without restraint and insulting people a little. He never seemed serious about his insults when I knew him—he was just a teaser. He must have been nervous about the trip. It wasn't the start he had imagined when he first started planning the running away. He thought they would board a train and head directly for Germany. None of this sled and password nonsense.

They rode like this for a couple of hours, talking at times, keeping quiet mostly. My father saw that Fred was a quiet man, slow to anger, and not sure of his own abilities. He was tall and gangly, and spoke as if he were poorly educated, even less educated than my father. But he was careful with his words, and he displayed a knowledge of the world that seemed mature for his age. Fred was the youngest, and Peter Kence the oldest. They were separated by about 8 years, so maybe Fred was 18, maybe 17. He didn't seem scared by the trip, as if he spent time with a rougher set of friends than either of the other two men had experienced. Peter Kence was obviously the most cosmopolitan, even though Fred lived in the same city as Peter. My father was the rube, certainly. He had had few friends growing up because there were no children his age. He was wary around strangers then, but he tried to find common ground and things to talk about. He wanted to have friends, but he was feeling his way around how to do it.

He missed Olena.



The wagon stopped by some woods near the road, at the bottom of a small, shallow valley. It looked like a small stream passed under the road, and the man wanted to let the horses drink. He jumped off the driver's bench and whistled, pointing to the back of the wagon and then into the woods. He had led the horses to the stream, pulling the wagon behind them. My father saw him walk partway into the woods and start to do *choonies*. My father, Peter, and Fred didn't need much encouragement to take a break from the wagon shake off some of the hay, and relieve themselves. They stood about 3 or 4 feet apart, facing in different directions. Modesty goes back a long ways.

The driver took his time and let the horses rest a while. He brought some of the hay from the wagon and put it down for them to eat. He stroked their backs and withers. My father took a close look at the sled. It was quite old. The sides were horizontal boards attached to 3 vertical posts that fit into brackets on the sides of the wagon, so the wagon could hold a tall load of loose hay with the sides up or a load of bales with them off. He looked at the bales at the front.

Hey, I think we should move those bales, make ourselves a little cave under them. We'll get less hay on us, we can sit up, and if some of the hay slides off the back of the sled we'd still be hidden. We can use the side over there, and cover the top with hay. I think it'll be more comfortable and safer.

Peter Kence wasn't so sure, Why do all that work? We don't know how far we're going today. Maybe it's just over the next hill.

Then why did we stop here?

To let the horses drink. Maybe the next hill is steeper. Maybe we're heading into the Carpathians.

What do you say, Fred? Want to help?

Sure.

My father walked to the front of the wagon and asked the driver if it was alright to rearrange the hay and bales,, but the man looked at him for a minute and then went back to the horses without saying anything.

Fred and my father moved the hay and bales away from the front of the wagon, and piled up the bales 2 high all around. Then they put a couple of bales on top for a roof, and finally covered it all with hay. The side was how they would get into the cave, pulling one bale on that side as a door with hay pulled on top of it to complete the cave. They were lucky that there were more bales than my father had originally thought. The wagon turned out to be half filled with bales, which was under the hay they had been lying on.

Wonderful, Peter Kence said. Just like a girl's playhouse in the living room. Do you have dolls and a tea set?

But Peter Kence didn't say much when he got into the cave and found that he could sit up and lean back against the bale between the cave and the driver. They pulled the final bale into place and filled the top with hay that

they pulled in. Fred had long arms and pulled another bale between the entrance and the side of the wagon.

The driver, never saying a word to them, made a clicking sound and the horses backed the wagon up with a great deal of difficulty enough so they could pull the wagon back onto the road. The driver climbed back up onto the bench, and they moved on.

With three men in the bales' cavity, the air warmed up quickly, and they were able to remove their hats and unbutton their coats. And when they talked, the bales and hay muffled their voices.



Just as Christmas season started, my father went to the cemetery where his father was buried, near the church in the village. He went there alone. It was a sunny day and warm for the season. He wasn't alone—there was a short, old woman. She had thick calves and her feet looked like they were swollen. She wore a shapeless dress made into her shape by a rope belt around her waist, and she wore a kerchief on her head. She had a *pysanky* in her hand. She was standing in front of a grave that had been there since my father could remember. It was, he thought, her husband. She crossed herself in the Orthodox style and placed the *pysanky* on top of the headstone, which was shaped as a cross. She turned to my father, said goodbye, and then left slowly, the pain in her legs obvious—she moved delicately from one leg to the other as if her knees could not bend, but only her hips sway to move her forward.

The grave, though a couple of years old, still wasn't completely covered with grass, and the shape of the hole the men dug was still clear. And the surface was indented, as if the coffin had maybe collapsed or something had been removed. Perhaps the body indeed had ceased to exist.

My father crossed himself and said a small prayer silently, but God could hear he was sure. He spoke out loud, though, to his father.

You've made my life here a torment. I have no friends and I cannot even begin my life until Pylyp has his family. I have done as you've asked. As you've demanded. My mother has gone mad, it seems, since you've left us, and she finds it impossible to find anything worthwhile in me. I have decided to leave this village and find my way far from you. You said I didn't have any courage. I didn't have the courage to choose to leave on my own, but I found courage enough to leave with someone else. Someone you've never met. With him I will travel away. I won't tell you where in case you should find a way to follow. I don't wish to make NENYA and Pylyp suffer or work too hard, but you cannot expect me to give up my life so easily. Goodbye, Tatu. May your rest be as you deserve it.

This was a side of my father I rarely saw. He would never admit.... Richie, you know what I mean. You know.



The men didn't realize something was wrong until they felt the wagon stop, and then they could hear the sound of horses coming up beside the wagon.

Halt, I say, halt. Stay where you are.

It was a voice my father didn't recognize.

Where are you going with this hay wagon?

To the Zelinka farm.

Did you stop for a rest about 5 miles back by the stream?

Yes, and I watered the horses.

How many times did you piss?

How many?

Yes, did you piss just once, or three times?

What are you talking about?

We saw the yellow holes from at least 3 people near the wagon. And there were footprints to the woods, and another yellow hole. Did you make all those?

No. Someone must have come behind me.

We saw no one. We will check your wagon.



One of the men got down off his horse and climbed onto the wagon. He jumped up and down on the hay. Another of the men threw him a gun. He took the gun and poked it down the hay. Several times.

Are you sure no one is on this wagon?

The man plunged the rifle into the bales of hay, but it didn't penetrate into my father's cave. My father said that he and Peter Kence and Fred were shocked into a kind of paralysis. He was certain they would be found by these men, whoever they were. It was dark in there, but my father said he slowly laid down flat, and the other two men did the same once they felt what he was doing.

If someone is in this pile of hay, this will get him out.

My father heard this. He said he thought of each person he loved in the world—Olena, his mother, and his brother—and said his goodbye to each.

The man stood as high as he could on the hay, cocked the rifle, and shot down into the hay bales. The bullet missed my father and the two men and went through the wood plank of the sled and into the mud below. My father now knew he would die.

The horses reared up and jumped forward, trying to run away. The sled lurched and the man with the gun fell backward onto the hay and continued to fall back onto the ground, hitting heavily on his head. He screamed in pain. The other riders laughed.

Yes, that will show them! That will teach them to hide in a hay wagon.

The man who fell had trouble getting up. The pain in his neck was severe. He tried to hide it, but that night he would not be able to sleep, and sometime in the next couple of days he would turn his head too far, and he would lose consciousness and die. His neck had been factured—the piece that held the carotid had broken off, and turning his head too far cut off the blood to his brain.

He got onto his horse slowly. The men rode off in the direction they had come.

The sled was racing down the hill, and the driver got control of them. He didn't say a word to my father's group. They lay there in shock. They never found out who the riders were. They heard about the man falling off the wagon when the driver told the story to his friends that night at the house. Peter Kence's father sent Peter Kence a newspaper story about the Bolshevik militiaman who died from a neck injury two days after his son had left. And I knew about the sort of neck injury that could kill a man days after a bad accident when it happened to a boy in my high school. Yes, I put it together. But this story is the most important story in my life.



Hours later the wagon stopped, and the driver yelled for them to get out of the hay. My father, Peter Kence, and Fred pushed the hay and bales off and climbed down from the wagon. It was dark, and they were off the road and down a farmer's path and in front of a small hut.

In there, the driver said. Wait until someone comes tomorrow.

There was another man smoking behind the hut, and the driver and he seemed to know each other. The driver told the story of the encounter with the militia, and they laughed when the driver told of the man falling off the sled backward.

But be careful tomorrow, the driver said.

My father and the others went into the hut. It was empty. The floor was dirt. My father started to unroll his bundle and the wrapped sandwiches fell out. He shared the meal with Fred and Peter Kence. They didn't talk. They heard the horses making sounds, and they heard the sled leave. They didn't know whether both men left. They went outside only once—or twice—each to do *choonies*.

My father said he had never come so close to dying as that. He said he imagined all night the bullet hitting him, how it would feel to die; how it would be to be dead. He said it felt like it would be a pointless death. He imagined being killed by the bullet and no one noticing until he didn't move when the driver said to get out. He became angry at the men, whoever they were. He imagined climbing out of the hay and beating the men to death one by one.

They were tired but couldn't sleep well. It was a long cold night.

## Then Go!

When I woke up what had happened the day before hit my father.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph he said when Peter Kence woke up. Those fellas tried to kill us. Who were they?

The Bolsheviks I told you about. They don't want us to leave.

But kill us?

They were trying to flush us out like a dog flushes a bird.

They shot at us.

They might have been drunk.

Drunk. That makes it alright, is that what you're saying?

No. Just that they weren't trying to kill us, just get us to show ourselves.

They spend the day in the hut or out behind it. There was a stream nearby and Fred went down with their canteens to fill them up. They spent the day worrying about whether anyone would come like the driver said. My father yelled at Peter Kence about how dangerous the plan was, and how stupid Peter Kence was to have agreed to something so crazy.

The password!, my father shouted. Didn't you realize when they told you about the password that something funny was going on? You made a deal with a crooked agent!

No, the password is to how they know we made a deal with a real agent. The crooked agents don't make you pay half as much as we will.

Fred didn't join in the fight. He was probably scared too, but he felt like he was with two grown men and they would take care of him. He sat in the hut or behind it on a wide chunk of hardwood log used for a chopping block to split wood. They watched the road down below and figured with the trees behind them and the hut that no one on the road would see them if my father and the others didn't see them coming in time to get into the hut.

The day was short, and it was cloudy all day. Bitter. It would snow later, my father was sure. The plan was not working. They were alone, and soon they'd have to decide whether to try to head up the road or down it. They were sure they knew which way was back, but there could have been forks in the road they'd have to figure out. And no food. They didn't have any food. The hut had nothing. There was a farm they could see on the next rise over, but they weren't sure they were still in the Ukraine, though it didn't seem like they went far enough to be anywhere else. None of them had been much to the north of Podilsky.

It started to get dark, and they went into the hut.



When it started to get dark a fella came in and he says Take out the handkerchief he tell it was the password, was the handkerchief. He say get ready we go. He was on a horse back, it was snowing, and he was going ahead slow. And we was walking behind. Well we walked maybe mile that way.



They heard a horse coming up the path; it stopped, and a man came into the hut and looked over my father, Peter Kence, and Fred. He asked for the password and my father took out his handkerchief. They rolled up their bundles, grabbed their canteens, and headed outside. It was dark, but the snow seemed to provide enough light. Anyway, they were able to see the ruts in the path and the road well enough to make their way behind the man, who was on a horse. The horse and rider went slowly so they would be able to keep up and not have too much difficulty on the path and then the road.

It started to snow.

They walked this way behind the horse for maybe a mile—it was about 20 minutes. Then the man said

Walk this way and keep on. If anybody asks you, you're heading to a rich man's farm to work. Zelinka's farm. It is up this road, but you need to turn off before the border. Tell them you're going there.

Then he pulled the reins to the side and the horse jerked and galloped away. My father didn't know what to

do he said

What the hell?

We walk this way, just like he said, Peter Kence said.

Fred was having some trouble with his feet. He told them his shoes and stockings had gotten wet during the day when he went to the stream to fill the canteens, and now they were starting to hurt from the cold.

Well, soon you'll warm up, Peter Kence said.

My father wasn't sure, but he kept quiet. The snow got heavier, and they sometimes weren't sure they were on the road. But they would always come to a stand of woods and the way would be clear and they were sure they were on the road. The temperature kept dropping, and my father wondered how long it would keep snowing if it got too cold. They sometimes saw some pine trees off to the side and they talked about stopping to rest or to spend the night. They talked about building a fire, but my father hadn't brought any matches. Peter Kence didn't say anything when he asked him.

We need to keep going. That's what the man said, Peter Kence said.

He was on a horse. Those militiamen or whoever they were were on horses, my father said.

He didn't have a gun, Peter Kence said.

He didn't have a gun we could see. He could have a revolver.

He knew the password, Peter Kence finally said, ending the discussion.

They walked on through the snow, up and down small rises, in and out of stands of trees, past dark farms off in the distance. Fred complained about his feet. He wasn't whiny about, but his complaints were about his need to stop and do something about his feet. My father thought about exchanging stockings with Fred, but he couldn't because of the secret pocket in them for his money.

After a while they got frustrated—Fred wanted to stop and light a fire to dry out his boots and stockings and warm his feet—and Peter Kence started to holler for the man.

Hey, you fella on the horse? Where are you?

Peter Kence called out. He cupped his mouth with hands and shouted in all four directions.

He must be out there?

Why do you think so?, my father asked.

Because he is guiding us.

Then why isn't he right here guiding us?

I don't know. Maybe he isn't supposed to talk to us?

And, what, that's too hard for him to do?

If he were here Fred would want to get on his horse, and he can't do that.

The snow had slowed, and soon it stopped. They kept walking. Slowly. Fred was making a labored sound with every step, or a hurt sound—his feet were not doing well. They decided to stop when they got to another stand of pines. They found a stone, and Fred sat on it. My father told him to take off his shoes and stockings. Fred's feet were cold, but they didn't seem frostbitten to Peter Kence, who said he knew frostbite when he saw it. My father told Fred to put his stockings under his shirt and near his skin to dry them out. Fred's boots weren't very wet.

Peter Kence said

Here, I have an extra pair of stockings in my bundle. You can wear them until yours dry out.

My father stood and stared down at Peter Kence. There was helping yourself, but this wasn't a situation where you had to look out for yourself. Not yet. He felt anger at Peter Kence, an anger like what he had sometimes for his father—and his mother. But this time he felt the urge strike out. He wanted to hit Peter Kence in the face and give him a taste of life. They needed to stick together to make it to America together.

My father turned away and walked deeper into the stand of pines.

*Choonies*, Peter Kence asked.

Yes, *choonies*, my father answered. Let's get those stockings on and get going, he said to Fred.

Fred thanked Peter Kence. He knew Peter Kence was a man who would look out for himself first, while I hope

he believed my father would help him.

My father took the chance to relieve himself. He stood behind a cedar facing away from the other two men. He wasn't comfortable holding himself like that when others could see. He was still agitated with Peter Kence for his selfishness. He needed to think about this trip more once they to their next stop. Wherever that could be.

Back on the road, they walked. Fred's feet were doing better. Peter Kence shouted every now and then for the horseman.

After another hour they saw a light up ahead. They made it their destination. Distances at night can be deceiving, and it took them another 30 minutes to get close to the light. They stopped about 100 yards from the house. It was a light hanging on a hook next to a door. They weren't sure whether to go to the house or go past it. It was the first house they had seen close enough to the road to even consider a stopping point.

I say we knock on the door and ask whether we can stay, my father said.

No, we keep going. The man didn't tell us to stop anywhere, Peter Kence said.

We've been walking for hours, we haven't eaten, and we don't have any faith that the horseman will ever return. We've not seen nor heard anything from him. I say we stop and then tomorrow think about whether this trip makes any sense.

They talked for a while, and didn't notice the horse until it was nearly upon them. The man on it said

You boys did pretty good.

The horseman had been watching them from a distance. He had ridden out into the fields and was paralleling them. He didn't want to be caught if someone approached the three runaways. He had certainly watched them stop under the pines, and he must have heard Peter Kence hollering for him.

Didn't you hear us, Peter Kence asked.

Yes, I heard you. I hoped no one else did. You boys are fools to make a noise like this. Sounds can carry at night. And you didn't see them, but there were farms and houses just on the other side of some of the woods you passed. I saw one man out on the top of a hill watching you boys walking. This was after you stopped in the woods to rest, but at least you didn't yell. Maybe he heard you coming. Go to the house.

They walked the rest of the way to the house. The door was open and they went in. There were three men in the room, sitting around a small table drinking with a bottle and three glasses. It looked like something distilled in a regular distillery and not something made on a farm. The three men were wearing similar clothing—there were three, long dark blue coats on the backs of their chairs, and they wore brown shirts and blue pants with black boots. One of them was coughing almost without stopping as if he were ill. There was a small firebox against the far wall and it was burning some sort of wood—it looked like charcoal of some sort, like coal but the smoke didn't have that distinctive coal smell. They were playing cards, but not betting.

They all looked up at the newcomers, and the two who weren't coughing started to bicker.

Looks like three men to take over. Why don't you take them over.

No, I took the last ones, you take them over.

No, it's too cold out there.

My father didn't know where they were going to be taken, but it seemed like these three men were waiting for my father and Peter Kence and Fred.

The door opened suddenly and a man in a uniform walked in. He was a soldier. He said

Don't be afraid.

Then he shook hands with Peter Kence, then my father, and then Fred. The soldier said

Hurry up, we have to go because in 5 minutes they're going to change the guard.

One of the men at the table said, then let's go.

They walked out of the house and down the road a little more and there was a small shack. This was the border to Austro-Hungaria.



After in Hungaria Halt, who goes there?

Runaway.

All right. Come on.

Where are you goin'?

We go to America.

So, why don't you stay with us? With us it's better than it is in Russia.

No we just goin go to America. That's all.

All right. I can't stop you. Then go.

## Ice Chips / Ice Cream

My father was getting tired at this point, and it was not very late. I went to the nurse's station and asked whether I could leave for a while and come back. She looked at me with some melancholy in her eyes and said Sure, you can come back any time; you can stay the night if you want.

I went to my father and said Why don't you take a little nap and I'll be back in about 45 minutes? Ok, he said. He had been starting to slur a little during the part of the story about walking with the rider out from them, and I thought—I hoped—it was the medication he was on. I knew he wanted to tell me that story that night, but when he got to this point, he was obviously tired but I could also see he was hesitant to go on. The rest of story made him nervous or upset.

I gave him another ice chip and I went downstairs and out to the car. It was still light out and hot. I could smell the river and the cut hay from the farms nearby. I wanted to get an ice cream, and there was a good stand about 1 mile toward Merrimac. Hodgies. It had opened about a year earlier and it was known for its outsized portions. But it would be mobbed at this hour.

I had his car. It was a convertible, which always surprised me. It had custom fenders and he had told me he made those fenders. He said he worked sometimes for an automobile company in Amesbury—they made sheet metal parts for Packard and Pontiac. I had wondered where he learned sheet metal work—I thought he was only a farmer, had been a farmer in the old country and here too.

I concentrated on the beautiful evening, and when I got to Hodgies it wasn't as crowded as I thought it was. It was a classic New England ice cream stand with windows under an overhanging roof, a raised platform in case the parking lot flooded—because you know no one cared if it was raining when they wanted ice cream. The windows wrapped around to the side so 6 people could be serving at the same time—girls from the high schools mostly. Inside it was just a big room with insulated containers—big, big ones—filled with different flavor ice creams. Along the back were boxes of cones. Some people brought their own bowls and spoons and the girls would fill them.

They had crazy sizes: single scoop, quarter kiddie, kiddie, small, and large. The single scoop was really a single scoop, and it was for babies. The other sizes were 1 scoop, 2 scoops, 3 scoops, and 4 scoops. But they would first fill the large cone with ice cream before starting to count. A large—4 scoops—was nearly a quart of ice cream. Big scoops. When you ordered a large, they put it in the cone, but the cone would not hold the weight for long, so they put it in a long wax-lined bowl and gave you a spoon you needed to return.

Out behind the stand was a grove of pine trees with picnic tables among them. The ground was so worn down that the roots laced the ground and it was hard to walk back there, especially at night. My father loved the place, and they used milk and cream from our farm, sold to them by the Star Milk Company. Fresh from Moo to You was their motto and was painted on their milk wagons.

I parked the car by the road and got in line. I was thinking about the story my father was telling, and I didn't notice that Ethel was in the line next to mine.

Helen, she said, they said you came by the office today.

Yeah, I was on my way to see my father. He's sleeping now but I'm going back after this.

How is he doing?

Not good. The doctors won't say, but I'm afraid. He isn't getting better it seems to me.

You poor girl. Who's taking care of the cows and the farm?

I am. My mother is sick and can't help, so I get up early and after work I take care of them too. The hay and corn fields are ok for now, but I'll need help with haying and bringing in the corn. Connie's no good. He'll have to help.

I ordered a quarter kiddie of maple walnut. Ethel and I found a table at the far end of the grove. I couldn't stay long. She got a black raspberry. Ethel and I went to high school together, you know. I've told you about her before.



Helen, what do you think really happened to your father?

What do you mean?

I've been hearing some things around. Your mother's acting a little strangely—not going to the hospital.

I didn't know how to answer her. I was on the Cape when it happened. By the time I was back your grandfather was in the hospital, Nana was drunk in her room, and the police were asking questions. Nana had told me the horses had kicked him while he was unhooking them outside the barn. Then she said they had lurched forward when he was getting ready to unload the hay from the wagon, and the wagon's tongue had hit him in the belly. She was not making a lot of sense. Sam told me my father laid out on the grass by the garage over night before he took my father to the hospital. You don't interfere in other peoples' business, he had said. The Wyche-saks said Sam took him right away. Sam said they were fighting over the weekend and the fight was going on during the week.

But it was Chief Donahue who made me wonder the most. He came by 2 days after I got back. It was in the evening, and we sat out on the porch and I brought him a lemonade. I had thought to run out into the back field and get a jar—just like he was used to. After telling me he was sorry about my father he started to ask questions.

I hate to have to ask you these questions, Helen, but I've got a man who is in the hospital who might not make it, and I need to get to the bottom of it.

Ok.

You were not here when the accident happened, right?

Yes, I was on the Cape. I left Friday night the week before, July 2. And I returned the following Friday.

And your mother, Mrs Sanuk told you what had happened?

Yes, she said it was an accident with the horses.

So, as far as you know, she didn't see the accident?

She didn't say she did.

Did she say anyone had visited that day? Someone who had spoken with your father?

She didn't say anything about that.

Is your mother a heavy drinker?

I don't think so. Not for a Russian.

Donahue laughed.

Is she a lot older than your father?

I...don't.... No. My father was born in 1888 and my mother in 1899. So she's 11 years younger. I think. They aren't so good with dates back in the old country. I'm not even sure when they came over.

Does your mother.... Is she the bossy sort? I mean, does your father.... Does he takes orders from her?

Orders? What do you mean?

I'm trying to get at this, Helen. I need to know whether there was something not normal about who wears the pants in the family. Like, was your mother the boss of the family, or was your father, or did they share decisions?

Well, Chief Donahue, I think they were normal. I don't have a lot to go on for what's normal. We're way out here on the farm and I don't see a lot of married people in private. In their homes, I mean. When they're alone. How could I? My mother would not let my father push her around, if that's what you mean?

Maybe. I heard.... There was a report that there was a fight between a man and a woman on this farm the day of the accident. Could that have been anyone other than your mother and father?

It could have been Connie and my mother. Or Connie and one of his girlfriends. I doubt it was Maggie or Ann. Maggie Wechezak and Ann Scherbon across the street?

Yes.

The Amesbury Hospital—the doctors over there say that a Mr Scherbon drove your father to the hospital Thursday afternoon. The accident happened Wednesday. Do you have any ideas about why your mother waited so long? I mean, the doctors operated right away, so it was obviously a serious injury. He couldn't...um, relieve himself, I was told. Do you have anything you could tell me about that? Helen? I know these questions are not

easy, but I need to ask them. Do you need a minute?

I was crying. Nana has a vicious temper, and she went at my father like a wolf. He would fight back, but he would start out angry—and dangerous, I always thought—but finished defeated or retreating. They both drank a lot, and Nana was drunk almost every day. They fought over this. My father believed she was not helping the way a proper wife should. She talked about her rich family. Donahue wanted me to tell him these things, but why? Did he think my mother did this? Maybe got behind the horses and spooked them? She was too little to do anything else. Well, she's not little, but too short. She was about a foot shorter than my father. He could throw those bales—the machine man ones—15 feet. I doubt a full-grown man could even push my father off his feet. I know he couldn't.

I don't know. Maybe it didn't seem so bad at first? Or, my father is stubborn and didn't want to go. Maybe he thought it would be expensive, and we don't have any money. Not really. My mother. She's been in her room since the accident. Maybe she was up there asleep and my father couldn't call to her or she didn't hear or he couldn't walk. He can't walk now. And Sam and Ann—they would stay out of anything that wasn't their business.

Fine. Your father seems to have spent the night out on the lawn. Over back there. Next to the garage. Does it seem strange to you your mother didn't notice him...um, he didn't come to bed—don't you think she would notice that?

Maybe. She sleeps heavily. If she fell asleep, she might not notice.

A thought occurred to me then.

Or, do you mean, did my father have a girlfriend, and that's why my mother didn't notice. That she knew about the girlfriend. Or, the girlfriend made her angry and she spooked the horses? What do you mean?

I cried harder. I had to get up and stand by the railing so he couldn't see me. Couldn't judge me. My father liked privacy and wouldn't like the Chief prying like this. What did he want to know. What was he getting at? I wasn't even there. What could I know about it? He should talk to Connie.

I don't mean anything. I have a report.... I mean, the accident has some, um, things about it that don't add up the way a regular or routine accident usually does. I've investigated a lot of farm accidents, and usually it all fits like a glove. I mean, it's a regular story.

He sipped his lemonade, which he had left alone until then. It was on a little portable table we used out on the porch. There weren't many mosquitoes for some reason.

Last summer, Mr Scherbon borrowed your father's hay mower, and Mr Scherbon broke the driver bar. I heard this from Mr Scherbon. When he tried to return the mower, your father saw the broken bar and demanded Mr Scherbon pay for a new one. Mr Scherbon said he offered to repair it, but your father got angry. Very angry, and demanded payment right then. Mrs Scherbon found some coins in a jar in her kitchen and paid him right then. Mr Scherbon said your father was very angry and Sam was surprised. Surprised because either he or your father could have easily repaired the driver bar or made a new one. My question is, it seems that your father has a temper that can get out of control sometimes. Have you seen that recently?

Sam and my father are old friends. They're from the same part of the old country, the Ukraine. I think they knew each other over there. And my father helped Sam buy that farm. They never would fight.

I see. Thank you, Helen. We have no reason to think this was something other than an accident. We need to be thorough because we write reports on these investigations, and my job depends on writing proper reports. You know your father and I are friends. You see me here every now and then playing cards with your father and, um, having a sip. No one has an interest in anything happening to the farm. Good night.

Anything happening to the farm? I was too flustered to notice him walking to his car and driving away. I was just reaching for empty glass when I looked up and noticed Ann Scherbon looking out her living room window. Nosy. They kept out of your business, but they sure knew what that business was. They were both here. Why don't they tell the cops what happened? I'm sure they were looking out their windows the whole time. Two farms in a 3-mile radius and our houses are 100 feet apart. Just the road in between. And they live practically across



the street from each other in the old country too.

Ethel, the police chief thinks maybe it wasn't an accident. He asked about my parents fighting, other people visiting, how the story doesn't add up. He asked about this.

I held an imaginary jar in my hand and tipped it toward my mouth

You know, the old bottoms up. I said who doesn't drink when they have no money. And Donahue, he drinks too. My mother isn't talking any sense—not that she does anyway. She stays in her room. She hasn't changed her clothes in weeks. She smells like the pigs. Worse. I bring food to her room and she sounds like a pig eating in there. How should I know what's going on? Why do the police ask me?

Sorry, Helen. Sorry, sorry. I didn't mean anything. I just thought you...you could use someone to talk to.

The mosquitoes were swarming. The stand had some outside lights that attracted bugs. Bats flew by for their evening dessert.

I have to get back. He wants to finish telling me this story he's telling me tonight. How he came here. I don't know if he's making it up or there's some point to it. He says he's giving me advice for the future. He's talking like he's about to die. He's not getting better but he's not getting worse either. He's strong. He's strong, Ethel.

I was crying again when I got up to leave. I tripped on a root and threw the rest of my cone at the tree. God damn you, I said, meaning my mother. She knew more than she was saying. Why couldn't she be in the hospital dying.



I hadn't noticed it before. I usually was a passenger in the convertible. I wasn't a regular autoist like other people. It was the light. The front fenders were sleek things. I always thought they were modeled after a woman's hip and thigh.

Oh, come on, Richie, don't think I don't know how the world is.

It was long and sleek, rose up and then curved slowly back down to the running board. And not flat, but curved from inside to outside too. Under the ice-cream-stand light I could see how smooth it was. I watched the light reflecting off it while I walked to the driver-side door. I was thinking of hopping in like the boys do when they're trying to impress. That's when I saw the marks. Little indentations like a small awl had made them. At first I thought they were damage from something in the garage falling down on the car, but when I bent over and looked, got the light just right on it by moving until I could see the pattern, I saw it. A Russian cross. And under it, the letter O. The points that made this design were smoothed by the paint and wax over the paint.

When I got back to the hospital, my father was still asleep. He looked different.

## Just Keep Quiet

My father was asleep when I sat down and I watched him sleeping for about 10 minutes. The room was hot and the fan was trying to do its job. Outside I could hear the peepers and crickets, their sounds sometimes crashing like a wave. Not a breeze that I could see outside. There were two beds in the room but the other was empty; I had put my purse on it. I sat in a sort of adirondack chair but thick hard cushions. I supposed it was a porch chair and that maybe it didn't belong in the hospital room. There was a table with wheels on it that could roll its wheels under the bed and make a table for my father. The floor was a faded red linoleum—very faded, with worn paths where people walked all the time. I could hear conversations down the hall, and sometimes a cough. A cry sometimes, from a child maybe on an upper floor. Footsounds; clattering; doors opening, closing; cars driving by; a mockingbird getting ready to sing all night; jays screaming; crows; sometimes a cow, but this had to be sound carried from far away.

I heard footsteps coming down the hall, echoing footsteps but soft, and the nurse came into the room. She looked around and then put her hand on his forehead—No fever she whispered. She felt his chest under the light sheet—Not sweating too much, that's good. Then she lifted the sheet and checked the dressing but didn't say anything.

You'll be here awhile, she asked when she got to the door.

Yes, maybe all night.

You can sleep on the bed there if you like.

The nurse left and I started to doze off. My father woke and said, Helen, you back so soon.

I went out for a drive.

Get ice cream?

Yes, and I saw Ethel. She asked how you were and sends her prayers.

Prayer. Yes, why not.

We talked for a few minutes. He asked about Nana but didn't press. I said she was staying in the bedroom and seemed upset. I told him the cows and chickens were all fine. He asked about the cows by name, but I can't remember them now. Bossy, though, we always had a cow named Bossy. I gave him another ice chip—I was surprised they hadn't all melted.

Where we were?

Just crossed into Hungary.

Austro-Hungaria. Yes. Well.

He still was speaking slowly, maybe still drowsy from the nap.

We can wait until tomorrow, Tato.

No. No tomorrow comin.

He paused for a while. I didn't try to push him.

A man come in a sled. Hosses and sled take us and he was going about half an hour or so and there was in woods was a house...empty house and put the bags over the windows. Fella said you go in house and wait. Don come out except maybe one at a time go to toilet somethin like that.



He said they went in and there were chairs and a table; there was a bare bulb hanging from a beam. It was dark still outside. They seemed to be on the edge of a town or maybe a city. They had no idea what time it was or when it would get light. Fred pulled out his canteen and took a long drink.

They talked for a while and then they grew silent as each of them was filled with fatigue from the long walk. It must have been not too long until light. They might have fallen asleep.

When my father opened his eyes he saw Peter Kence asleep but Fred was gone. He must have gone to the toilet. My father didn't know how long Fred had been gone, because he wasn't sure whether he had fallen asleep. He hadn't heard the door open, hadn't heard anyone talking. He decided to wait for a bit.

There were no sounds but Peter Kence's heavy breathing and occasional snort. Peter Kence had his head on his arms folded on the table. How he could sleep like that and not fall over. It seemed like 15 minutes, and my father woke up Peter Kence.

He's gone. Fred's gone.

Huh? What?

I woke up a while ago and Fred was gone. I waited maybe 10, 15 minutes and he's not back.

Peter Kence looked around. Fred's bundle was still in the house.

Ok, you go outside look around, Peter Kence said.

Me?

Yes, you're more awake and I'm a city man. You can look around without being seen.

You need a farmer for that?

My father went to the door and opened it just enough to see outside. No one was there. He opened it some more and knelt down, looking in the direction the door was opening. No one. He stepped outside and closed the door quickly but silently. He waited for his eyes to get used to the darkness. There were lights nearby so he didn't need to acclimate to total darkness. He listened and could hear only the sounds a city would make not far off. He could smell smoke, which meant people were getting up. There were houses he could see just on the other side of the small woods they were in. These woods must have been right on the edge of the town. The road in front of the house went into the town.

My father went around to the back of the house, and there was nothing. He could see a path faintly, and there were footprints, lots of footprints. He went down the path a ways and then thought he shouldn't do this alone. He went back.

You come with me. There's a path and maybe Fred went down there. I don't want to go too far away from the house alone.

Peter Kence didn't like this idea, but agreed. They went back to the path and started down it. They didn't want to call out to Fred. They stopped every couple of yards and looked around and listened. Fred was nowhere. The patch of woods was pretty narrow, so they got to the other side quickly. There they saw an alley running behind a row of houses. It was the town. The alley was perpendicular to the path they came out on. The houses were not very close together, but close enough that it meant this was the edge of a medium sized town or small city at least. They started down the alley away from where there were more lights, thinking Fred, needing to go to the toilet, would head away from where there were more people. They came to a path from the alley toward the front of the house. Behind the house were some fenceposts and other building materials, a shovel, and other tools. It looked like they were going to put a fence around the back of the house. They walked down the pathway and came to a larger road.

They looked up and down.

Fred's not around here. He must have gone the other way. The alley or he didn't come out the path through the woods, Peter Kence said.

Ok. We'll go back.

Just then my father heard a man coughing. They moved deeper into the shadows and tried to find where the sound was coming from. The man coughed again. It was coming from the right. They started down that way, staying next to the houses, ducking behind bushes. They came to a crossroad, and up to the left they saw four men. They were lit by a light from a house across the street from them. Three of them were wearing long dark coats and it looked like they had on black boots. It looked like the men from the house on the other side of the border. The fourth man was tall, and looked like he was wearing the coat Fred was wearing. The fourth man was standing between two of the others and it looked like they were talking—there were lots of gestures.

Is that Fred?

And the men from the house?

Could be. They must have met up when Fred went out to do *choonies*.

Fred, Fred, Peter Kence yelled.

Shh, my father hissed. We don't want to make a racket out here.

Just then one of the men pointed at them. The others grabbed the fourth man—the one they thought was Fred—and the coughing man started to run toward Peter Kence and my father.

They weren't sure what was happening. They didn't hear Fred call back. Wondering what to do, they stepped out into the middle of the road and put their arms out to their sides indicating puzzlement. The man running toward them stopped and reached under his coat. He pulled out what looked like a revolver, and then started to run again. My father blurted

Run!

And he and Peter Kence both ran back the way they had come. They got to the pathway back to the alley before the other man reached the street they were on. They went down the pathway, and stooped down beside the house. Peter Kence looked cautiously around the side of the house, and saw that the man had come to a stop and was looking down the street. He started walking, looking toward each house, looking behind each bush and tree. As he came closer they could see that it was a gun of some sort, and he was pointing it wherever he looked—behind the bushes, when he turned around to see if someone were behind him.

My father stopped his story and started to explain. He knew they were in a foreign country, and the men in the coats in the house across the border had to know they were runaways, and that therefore they had to have enough money to get to where they were going. If they had talked to the border guard, they would know that was America, and so they had to have over 100 rubles each. They didn't look like they belonged to a military exactly, but it looked like they belonged to some organized group. Perhaps the Bolsheviks. My father didn't like to think Peter Kence was right about that, but here they were being chased by someone in what looked like a uniform carrying a gun he was pointing in their direction. It looked like they had Fred, but he couldn't be sure. He assumed it was Fred. He told me he made a plan, then.

You run back to the house where our bundles are, my father whispered to Peter Kence. Don't go in, but wait for me. I'll take care of this man.

What are you saying?

Just go. Run now. But quietly.

Peter Kence stood up slowly then started out walking down the pathway, and finally he ran. My father waited a minute and then ran back to the house where the fencing materials were. He ducked behind the house and knelt down. If the man came down the alley, he would have to act.

The man did.

My father picked up the shovel and stood right at the corner of the house, as close as he could get without being seen. He had the shovel out to his right; his back was to the back wall of the house. He heard faint coughing. The running had started a coughing fit, and the man was trying to keep quiet.

The coughing got closer. And closer.

My father said he was praying the man would turn around and go back. He lifted the shovel to the level of his waist. For what seemed like minutes the coughing, very faint, got closer. Finally he was certain the man was just on the other side of the back wall, just around the corner.

My father said he started to swing the shovel like a baseball bat in the games he watched in Peabody and Merimac. At the same time he stepped around the corner to see what he was aiming at.

The man was right there, crouched down, head forward, looking at the ground as if looking for tracks. He was right next the house and no more than 4 feet away. He had the gun in his right hand and his left hand was to his mouth trying to stifle the coughs.

My father told me that he didn't know where the emotions came from. He said his arms and legs were twitching out of control a little. Rage seemed to be welling up from somewhere. Nothing was going through his mind, he told me. But he said that when he saw the man hunting him, he swung the shovel even harder, as hard as he could. He swung with the same kind of force he said he used on nearly dried, thick oak logs at the farm. The

man in the long, dark coat looked up just as the flat side of the blade of the shovel hit the left side of his head. Two sounds came at the same time, but only one of them lingered in the air. One was a cracking sound like a fat dried branch snapping. The other was a metal ring, a dull ring like a not well made bell might make, or a bell filled with cloth muffling. But it rang for what seemed like a minute.

The man went down immediately and didn't move. At that moment the sky seemed to get a little brighter, and my father said he saw that the snow around the man's head was getting darker quickly. The dark spot grew, but it grew more slowly as the seconds passed. He stepped back behind the house and into the shadows. He put the shovel back exactly where it had been. Though impossible, my father wanted things to go back to how they were before he and Peter Kence came looking for Fred.

Listening. He listened for a couple of minutes. No sounds, no dogs barking, no doors or windows opening, no machine sounds, no horses snorting. No breathing but his own. Stooping, he looked around the corner and the man was not moving. Not moving at all. He tried to look at the man's back to see whether he was breathing, but he couldn't see any. The sky seemed dark again.

Quietly he stepped back onto the pathway and walked slowly and quietly back to the alley, trying to step into tracks already made. He made his way to the path in the woods, and he could see the outline of the house at its end. Halfway back, he stepped into the woods and did *choonies*. So I had a reason to be out in the woods down this path if there were people near the house with the bags over the windows.

When he got to the house, Peter Kence was standing in the shadows.

Well, he said.

They aren't following us anymore. But we need to get out of here. Go into the town on the main road. We have to figure out what to do.

Ok, Peter Kence said. He had heard a tone to my father's voice that told him to obey.

They stepped around to the front of the house as if nothing were the matter and went inside.

Let's get Fred's bundle in with ours.

They unrolled Fred's roll, divided up the clothes, and my father rolled Fred's blanket under his when he re-rolled his bundle. While they were sitting at the table getting ready to leave, the door opened.

A man in a short brown coat stood there and just looked at them. Thinking quickly, my father reached into his pocket, pulled out the handkerchief, and started to wipe his nose.

The man said, You are going to America?

Yes, to Peabody, Massachusetts, Peter Kence said.

It will cost you \$150 each to get there.

My father and Peter Kence took a few minutes to get out their money.

Ok, come with me.

They gathered their things, the bundles all back together, and the three of them walked up the main road into town and to the railroad station. Leaving my father and Peter Kence outside, the man went in and in 5 minutes came out with a couple of tickets for each of them.

Train, then boat, the man said.

Across the street was a lone building that looked like a storage hut. The man took them over to it and told them to get inside and just be quiet. Don't open the door, don't make a sound. No matter what you hear. They heard the door being locked.

They found some old carpets to sit on. Just as they were getting settled, someone knocked loudly on the door.

Police! Open the door.

They sat there silently. My father told me he was scared out of his mind. He had probably just killed a man, and the police had followed them here. They sat there quietly, the knocking continued for a few minutes.

Police! Police!

Then it was silent. Because there were no windows, they sat there in the dark.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, Peter Kence said. What are we going to do?

Wait.



Next mornin the man come in, he unlock the door. He says you better, the train come in he said you just run to the train and first door, door's be open and get in and lock the door and just keep quiet. So we did. Because over here we don't got any like they got over there, because there they are rooms in the trains. So it come in, and we run in and lock the door from inside. Knock, knock, knock—police! Not police. Gendarme! Gendarme!

Just keep quiet.

And train just started to go about half an hour. Later this fella come in knock on the door, Come on, we go in the other car. And we sit down there.

That's all.



## Hods and Bundles

My father stopped talking then. I sat there too. He was looking down at his hands in his lap and I looked at him then out the window. The night air was taking over the hospital room, and I wanted to know what happened to Fred, wanted to ask. But it didn't look like he wanted to talk about that night. And the man with the gun—did my father really kill him? As I thought about it I realized that he couldn't know about the man with the gun. Fred, they might have heard from him.

I wondered who else knew this part of the story? Peter Kence did certainly, or at least the part about Fred disappearing and being chased. Only my father was there for the ambush. And was this what happened or a story my father made up to make himself ok with the whole situation. Did Nana know?

The night minutes passed and after a while it seemed the room settled down, and my father continued.



After not too long they came to a train station or switching yard, and they disconnected the different cars to form a new train. After the train had been reformed, another man came into the car and sat down next to my father.

What's the password?

Handkerchief, my father answered.

Yes, ok, that's the one. You follow me when we get off the train.

They rode for many hours. After leaving Lvov, a woman came through the car with a cart of hot food and tea. They bought quite a bit to eat because they hadn't eaten for a couple of days, and they were tired too. Kielbasa, saurkraut, pirogi, tea, and heavy bread. They ate like starved dogs. No one was in the car except them and the man who asked for the password. He sat at the back of the car and read a book.

Peter Kence and my father slept for a couple of hours, waking only when the train stopped to load and unload and for people to get on and off. For some reason, no one else got on their car—it was just them and their guide. Possibly this car was set aside for passengers of the agency Peter Kence contracted with. That of course would mean there was a lot of arrangements made along the way, and my father doubted anyone in Podilsky could have made arrangements so far away from that city.

When they were nearing Krakow, they woke up and Peter Kence started to ask questions.

What happened after I left you?

Nothing, I just waited and came back to the house.

What happened to the man who was chasing us?

He went another way, I guess. I didn't see him again.

I heard a sound. A metal sound.

So did I. I don't know what it was.

All right. Do you think that was Fred they had?

I don't know. I don't know Fred enough to be able to recognize him easily.

I think it was Fred. I bet he went outside to go to the toilet, and the men from the other house saw him and decided to rob him. Or that was their plan all along. Maybe they were going to come into the house we were hiding in to rob all of us, and Fred somehow prevented that.

Maybe. We'll know only if we talk to Fred. Or those men, but I hope we never see them again.

Peter Kence broke off a piece of the bread and took the last piece of keilbasa and started to chew on them.

What am I going to tell Fred's family, Peter Kence asked no one.

Don't tell them anything. It's not your responsibility.

Yes, I think it is. I told Fred we get to America together, and that's a promise between my family and Fred's.

Maybe in elitist circles it is, but not in Teremcy.

If Fred were a friend of your father's you'd tell his family if he were lost.

You don't know my father and you don't know me.

Well, ok. I don't know you.

No, you don't know me at all. No one does.

My father seemed to be telling me this too, not just telling it as part of the story.

The man at the back of the train—their guide—came forward and sat across the aisle from them. He looked around to make sure no one had come into the car before speaking.

I heard you talking about another man. Wasn't there supposed to be three of you?

Peter Kence hadn't expected a question like this, and his eyes shot all over the car searching for an answer.

There was supposed to be a third person with us, but he didn't meet us where we started our trip. You might be thinking of the man we came across the border of Hungaria with. We met him on a sled we took back before that. I don't recall his name, do you?, my father asked turning toward Peter Kence.

No, I don't think he told us.

He was a tall man, but not as tall as me. And a brown coat. That's all I remember.

Peter Kence is not the smartest man, and sometimes when confronted with a lie he will remark on it, but this time he kept quiet. Perhaps the chase the previous night taught him that it paid to be less talkative when you weren't sure what was really happening.

The guide shrugged his shoulders.

Not my problem, friends. When we get to Mystovice just follow me.

Then he went to the back of the car and looked out the window.

It wasn't snowing, and the sun had come out from behind the clouds a bit, and the countryside had flattened out. Out the window they saw a road curving through a lane of elms with nest scattered in their branches. The road eventually through a small farm, the farmhouse painted a faint yellow. The stonework was perfect and the farmhouse stood 100 feet behind the house, with a tall peaked roof, surely filled with hay and corn for the winter. Not like home—too perfect. It was like a postcard. Across the road from the house was the cowbarn, open on one side but with sheltered stalls. A couple of coops stood off to the side of the cowbarn. The road looked to have been plowed earlier in the day with dark streaks of black dirt showing through its center.

Later the clouds cleared completely and the sky turned a sullen grey blue. Rising from the snow was a mist of light—perhaps a true mist but more likely just the effects of sunglare on the stained train window and the angle of the sun into my father's eyes. He said he could still remember the exact colors and shapes of the buildings. But the road's curves lingered most in his mind. He wanted to go home, he told me, but not our home in Merrimac but to Teremcy. It seemed to me that he was collapsing into his youth, as if the past had a stronger call than the recent.

You know Scottie, Sam's grandson from across the street, Richie? He visited Teremcy a few years ago, and he says most of Termency has been flooded—covered when they damned the Dniester downstream of the town. I'm glad he never knew this. Where is his family buried now, I wonder? I wanted to go there, but it was always too expensive for us.



Darkness had come long before they got to Mystovice, a city to the northwest of Krakow by about 35 miles. The train pulled into a large station, and their guide led them to a building across the street from the station. The room was filled with people who were waiting to go to Hamburg to get on a boat for America or England or someplace else. My father said they were appalled to see the families there, children crying, wating with their bags for their names to be called to get on the train. Speaking Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, German, Hungarian, and languages he couldn't recognize nor could Peter Kence. Every day they came to this building to wait.



And when we come in there were lota lota people were sitting there for about 6 months waitin for the...for the crooked agencies. They crying. And waitin.

We stayed their just, maybe 15 or 20 minutes. A fella called our name, Go out. And we go out. While I was



walkin I see the milkman delivered the milk with the dog drivin, pull the little wagon with the milk. We come in to that train, go to.... Oh my God, what the hell was is name?



Again they were the only ones in their car along with their guide. They bought some food in the station before getting on and replenished their canteens. They bought some hot tea and also some beer in bottles. The guide bought food too. They ate and talked about the people left behind to wait for their names to be called, but my father knew that after 6 months, no one was going to call their names. They would run out of money and be stuck in Mystowice. Someone would need to find work, and either they would try to book passage somewhere or try to go back home. Would they be welcomed or ridiculed for their foolish ideas.

Would Fred make it this far and then somehow get to America. He was heading with them for Peabody, so if he did make it, they would find out.

They stretched out on the seats—right across from each other—and fell asleep.

The next morning they bought tea and some sweet pastries from the woman with the cart. They must had forgotten, at least temporarily, the terrors of the trip so far. They were talking about the women they knew and the games they played as children, and they started to through around Peter Kence's hat, throwing it across the aisle to each other, and then seeing how far they could throw and catch it down the length of the train car. The guide was still asleep even though they were making a lot of noise.

On one throw, my father tossed the hat like you would a frisbee now and the flat hat curved off to the left. Peter Kence tried to catch it and lunged for it, his right arm extended. His hand and the hat met right at a rope that was strung the length of the car above the windows. Peter Kence grabbed onto to keep his balance. They kept laughing and playing.

Less than a minute later they could hear some mechanisms operating underneath their car, and then the train started to slow down, and it quickly stopped. People got off the train, and the conductors and engineer were trying to figure out who stopped the train. They went down one side of the cars and asked people whether they had stopped the train. When the got to Peter Kence and my father they asked them, and Peter Kence said, How would a person stop the train?

By pulling the cord.

The cord?

Yes, the cord that runs down each side of the car about the windows. It's and emergency stop cord that locks up the wheels on each car so the train will stop as quickly as it can.

Peter Kence looked at my father as if asking what he should do, and then he turned toward the engineer, who looked like the most sympathetic person there and said

I did it. We were throwing my hat around because we're so happy to be on our way to Germany, and I lost my balance and grabbed onto the rope. I didn't know what it was. I'm very, very sorry.

The engineer looked at Peter Kence for a minute or so, then looked at the conductor next to him. Clearly the engineer was angry, and my father was worried they would be put off the train. But Peter Kence is obviously like a little boy, and after another minute, the engineer said

Now you know. Please don't pull the cord again.

No, I will not. I'm very sorry.

My father said it was hard to not laugh. Peter Kence doesn't usually get his comeuppance like that. The engineer headed back for the engine, and the conductors went to each group of passengers and told them to get back on the train. Soon everyone was on board, the conductors were standing on the bottom stairs of each car looking up and down to make sure no one was still outside and that it looked safe, and they signaled to the engineer, and the train started off.

The guide came up to Peter Kence and said

Don't do that again. They'll put you off the train, and then you aren't getting to America.

My father and Peter Kence sat down. They fell asleep.

They slept soundly, coming to a half-awake state when the train stopped at stations or the train was reformed in switch yards. Sometimes my father would sit up half asleep and look through the car or out the window. No one came to their car, and it remained the three of them. It seemed, when he could think, that they could have taken some of those people from Mystowice—in this car. Compassion demanded it. But this wasn't the time in history nor the place on earth for compassion at the moment.

Once or twice my father got up to do *choonies*. There was a compartment at the front of the car labeled WC, and in it was a toilet that you could sit on, and when my father raised the seat cover he could see the rail ties below zipping past. While he went he thought about how it must smell by the tracks during the day, but he thought about how far the train traveled and how often people would use the WC—especially women sitting on the toilet with the rails going past right under them—and how the rails would disperse the materials, and he concluded it might not be so bad after all. And this explained the sign inside the WC that said in several languages—including Russian—to not use the toilet when the train was approaching a stop.

Trains are the most relaxing way to travel, my father always told me, even in America where the trains are primitive and utilitarian. The trains here don't go anywhere, he would say, and they weren't designed for people to travel, but for animals and goods. People in this country, he would say, don't know how to live—they don't care how to live. It's all about making money, getting rich, beating the other guy, taking from the earth and spoiling things. Maybe the Bolsheviks were right, he would tell me, and it's better to share and live well than to fight and some live very well and most are peasants. Here it's like the old style in Russia. Some people own everything, and everyone else works for those people and does what they say. Here you had slaves, he often said, and even though you say they are gone, that's the system you like. And so the food tastes bad, you don't have trains, you don't have writers, you don't have music, you don't have a civilization. The people who came here came because the land had not been used up as it had in the old country. They came because they wanted to take, and so they made a country where taking is the law and the only way. Here it is a virtue to be selfish and greedy—everywhere else it's a sin.

My father's ideas were set by the ideas that were swirling when he was young. In the old country there were the communists who were about to take power, and their ideas preceded them. The ideas were in play when my father left. And when he got here, the unions went after him as a possible organizer. They figured being from Russia meant he was a communist. He wasn't that, but he didn't like the way of life here perfectly either. The market determining everything left the passion out of it—the only passion was greed. It made no sense to him.

When they woke up it was clear and sunny, maybe around 8 or 9 in the morning. They were approaching what seemed to be a large city—they were in the outskirts of that city and the farms had become less frequent and the train was passing behind houses where people had their gardens and swings and wagons for their children. The sheds where they kept their gardening tools and the things that didn't fit in the house anymore but weren't to be discarded or given away were flimsy and half rotten. The roofs of some of them had bright green moss growing on them, and it seemed like some of them were made from sticks and leftovers.

The remnants of the gardens poked through the browned snow: tomatoes, beans, squash—all browned by autumn. My father noticed that the snow had been discolored—something had fallen after the snow. It looked to him like brown pellets, small ones.

As they got closer to the city, the sky began to get darker, but it didn't seem to be from clouds. It was smoke from factories and homes: coal smoke mixed with wood smoke, logs and charcoal. The backyards gave way to the backs of brick buildings and stone buildings with black pipes running down from the upper floors on their outsides, going straight up and down and sometimes veering to one side. The buildings were covered with soot, from the train and also from the smoke in the city. The train crossed over streets with carts and wagons, some autos but not many, people walking in top hats and flounced skirts, but most in workman's clothes, baggy, dirty, bulging. Men carrying hods and bundles. Horses, dogs, and mules pulling wagons. The sun's light was turned a

deep and dark yellow by the smoke. The conductor came into their car and shouted Berlin, Lichtenberg Bahnhof next.

My father was ecstatic. They were going to be in Berlin—the city he had dreamt about. The salons, the artists and writers. Their guide came forward and said the train would change at this station and they'd be connected to a train that would go to Hamburg—and it would take about an hour to do the switch. They were free to take a short walk, get some food, but they should be back in less than an hour.

My father and Peter Kence got off the train and walked outside into Berlin. They had noted the number of the car they were on and the track. Outside a main street passed by, east/west. They decided to walk west for 15 minutes to see what Berlin looked like, and then they would return and get some food for the train. They weren't sure what day it was, but they guessed it was the end of January. There was snow in piles on the sides of the street, but the snow was black with just a little white showing through. The signs on the shops were large and in a strange script. People wore hats or caps or scarves, the women's dresses had large skirts that took up a lot of the sidewalk. Men wore mostly black or a dark brown. Some of the stone buildings had elaborate flutes starting on the first floor—my father reminded me that in Europe at that time, the floor at ground level was called the ground floor, and the next one up was the first floor. He taught me this as part of his lesson on the inferiority of the American economic system. Many of the buildings had mansard roofs made of slate or tile. The tops of buildings taller than 3 floors were invisible from the smoke that hung low in the city. The people were rude to them, bumping into them and saying what sounded like nasty things in German. Now and then they could hear Russian in the background, or Polish, or even sometimes Ukrainian. All languages were spoken here, my father told me.

They turned back toward the train station but crossed the street to see the shops on the other side. There were clothing stores, groceries, dry goods, apothecaries carrying homeopathic and allopathic recipes. There were bakeries with sweet and plain goodies. Coffee seemed a preferred drink their noses told them. Heavy cigar smoke frequently broke through the coal and wood smoke smells. Meat being fried and roasted, eggs being fried, soup being simmered, fish frying—these and the odor of people who bathed only sporadically were what my father remembers from the walk. At one point he stopped when he saw a building across the street with a garret, and he imagined himself sitting up there, pen in hand, sketching in words the scene below and the two from the farmlands of the mighty Ukraine—two bumpkins on an idiot's journey from a country slowly falling out of peace to one brimming with greed and ambition. Which was the fire? The pan?

Jesus Christ, can you believe this what your eyes are telling you?, Peter Kence said.

Many people, much smoke, and unfathomable sounds, my father responded.

Nearing the station they began to look for a place to buy cooked food. One stood out with long lines and a large variety. They entered and got in the queue. They saw bottles of drinks they couldn't understand, bottles of milk, glass cases with meats and cheeses behind them, a stove behind the counter was hot with food cooking, pots were boiling, eggs being fried. And a steady stream of commands and counter-commands in a language that sounded completely absent of music to them. They saw several people order a drink that was made of a dark powder spooned into a jar of heated milk and then vigorously stirred. They could only look at each, both of them afraid to speak and reveal their foreignness.

It was their turn. First my father began pointing at sausages, thinking them to be something like kielbasa—but he chose a dark one and an almost light one. He pointed to a dark rye bread, he pointed to a jar of mustard, and he pointed to a couple of different cheeses. He pointed at an apple, and finally he pointed at a jar the woman in front of him had ordered with the brown powder drink. They would get water in the train station, he thought, in case this German drink was not drinkable.

Peter Kence pointed at a ham, and a roast beef, then at a light rye bread, some pickles, a bowl containing a light green vegetable of some sort that looked like it had been cooked, some potatoes, and a bottle containing light brown liquid. My father then also pointed at the potatoes. What kind of Ukrainian would eat a meal absent potatoes.

The woman behind the counter smiled at them and said something pleasantly using words that sounded like a dog trying to cough a chicken bone out of its throat. They smiled at each other and started to get out their money. Cooking and sandwich making ensued. The other items were put into brown paper sacks for them. My father watched while a woman made the warm brown drink for him. She turned to him and said Zucker? He and Peter Kence were astonished—she had spoken in her funny accent the Ukrainian word for sugar. My father shook his head no.

When the meals were ready, the woman called them over to the place they were to pay and said something to them. They held out their hands filled with enough money, they believed, to cover it. The woman looked at their Russian money, wrinkled her nose, and pulled coins out until their hands were almost empty. She looked at my father again, and reached for a canvas bag with a very wide weave and put the jar of brown drink in it.

Now Richie, you have to remember something while you hear these stories. When my father was young, he was a very handsome man. He had light hard, light brown eyes, and was very tall and muscular. It's entirely possible that they were not permitted to take Russian money, that the amount she took was insufficient, and the whole exchange was her being temporarily in love with the stranger from the east.

They walked out, got their bearings, and headed for the station. My father found a pipe spilling water into a basin just inside the entrance; he saw other people filling their bottles and buckets there, and my father and Peter Kence refilled their canteens.

They found the track and their car at the far end of the train that had been formed while they were away. Just outside the steps into their car there was a bench, and their guide was sitting there eating a piece of cheese. My father pulled out his handkerchief and waved it at the guide, who laughed. He was as old enough to be my father's father, and he was not used to children—as he would think of people my father's age—making a silly joke like that to an elder.



Twenty minutes later the train pulled out of the station. The station had a barrel-shaped roof that extended the length of the short train they were on. My father couldn't stop looking at Berlin, perhaps believing this was a close to his dream as he'd ever get. Slowly the train made its way through the center of Berlin to the Hamburger Bahnhof. Along the way the train was elevated above the streets. My father watched all the people and wondered whether he could have lived here successfully. He would need to learn the language, but he didn't know what that would be like. And it made him worry. He turned to Peter Kence and said

We need to learn some English on the boat. Otherwise we will be helpless until we get to Peabody and find more Russians.

There will be many different people on the boat, and it will take a fortnight to cross the ocean. We will certainly learn something, my friend.

At the Hamburger Bahnhof the train stood there for 30 minutes while people got on the other cars. Again, no one got on theirs.

The train left with a jerk. My father was watching the large clock just outside his window, and just when the second hand reached the top, the train moved. He turned to Peter Kence and smiled, thinking Such a thing would never happen in Teremcy. You listened for the train and met it at the station, and a while after that it would leave. Clocks were not common in his village.

The train left Berlin as slowly as it entered, and the same kinds of scenes played out in reverse. My father was tired of the scenes now—they changed slowly from Teremcy to here, and they were different, but not so different to be a different world. The language changed. The trees and crops were the same. The customs were similar. People dressed more elegantly in Berlin, and the buildings were bigger and more imposing, but not much else.

He remember the jar. He pulled it out of the canvas bag and unscrewed the top. He held it in his hands because it had lost most—but not all—of its heat. He was startled. The flavor was bitter, but with a tinge of sweetness to it, like coffee substitutes he had tasted. It was like some of the dark candies his father sometimes—very rarely but sometimes—brought home at Easter. It made him feel both more alert and sleepy. It was a sophist-

cated drink he thought, but more suitable for a woman than a man. He thought of Olena and how she would like the drink. He stopped for a moment to remember her, the last time he saw her. The smoke from her house as the train took him away. The stories he would have for her—would he be able to tell them all to her? Were they too violent, too filled with parts that would make her afraid for him even though he would be right there telling them to her and obviously fine? He thought of her breasts and holding them from behind the few nights they had together. He remembered the time after they had gotten as close to having sex as they felt safe with, how she whispered I love you not to him but to the wall she faced while he faced into the room. But he had heard her and he thought about saying it back. He didn't, and he didn't know why. He thought it was because he knew he would be leaving in six months. Or it could have been that he sensed—but could not articulate—that there were two different but very close by feelings a man could have for a woman, and one had to do with the body and the other the soul. The priest had talked about that, but it was abstract the way he walked around and around the point. The way the priest talked led simply to more ignorance and confusion, as if he were describing a decorated box and talking about its decorations while intending to talk about what's inside, what made the gift what it truly was and not what it appeared to be.

But he missed her and wished she could be here to share these strange white kielbasas with her, and these smelly cheeses, but most of all the brown liquid. What would it have been like had he drank it hot as he supposed was proper?

My father didn't know this, but the Ukrainian and German words for chocolate sounded almost identical. But he didn't know the word for it in Ukrainian, and so it was just another foreign sound to him. He needed to learn—and I don't think he ever did—that many things that seemed foreign were actually things inside him as well, and all he needed to do was erase the funny accent or look in the right place to see them. Olena loved him, and he could have known that he too loved her. But where was that word in him? They rarely had chocolate in their farmhouse, and so why bother to teach him the word?



So we come into Hamburg. We stay there, uh, I dunno, 5 or 6 days. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of January we left Hamburg.



## Kalyna Truss

When they reached Hamburg, their guide took them to a rooming house where they would stay until the boat left. He showed them where to meet on the morning of their departure, and he took them to the dock where a small boat would take them to the Pennsylvania. Finally he took them back to the train station where he gave them their tickets, and said goodbye. Before he left them, he asked them a series of questions that he said would be used by the consulate to arrange their travel documents, which they would receive at the place where they would meet on the day of departure.

I go now, back to Lvov, bring more people. More runaways.

Thank you for the safe trip, Peter Kence said.

They memorized where the three places were, and they hoped they wouldn't get lost. The guide had told them that at the train station they should exchange currency for German money, and before he left he pointed out the currency exchange. My father went into the WC where he took off his shoe and took out about \$5 in rubles, leaving about \$25. Peter Kence took about \$7 in rubles from his stash of money, and they went to the exchange.

The train station was again in a large, barrel shaped structure, and at the end where the trains stopped, there were a number of small places selling cooked food. Although they ate on the train from Berlin, they each got a small sausage and bread with sauerkraut. They went outside and sat on the stone steps and while they ate they watched people going about their lives. Hamburg seemed like a peculiar place to get on a boat for America because they weren't directly on the sea, which in their minds seemed like the reasonable and necessary condition. They had asked the guide who said they were on a river that went to the sea—that it was not far from the city.

Above the air was brown and yellow like Berlin, but much clearer. The buildings were not as thoroughly covered in soot, and the people looked healthier and with redder cheeks. Many of the women were beautiful and dressed very well. After sitting for 15 minutes in silence, they headed for the rooming house, which was only a few blocks away. As they walked down an alley toward the rooming house, Peter Kence noticed that some of the women were standing on the small stoops and their dresses or blouses didn't cover up their shoulders completely, even though it was a very cool day, and the sunlight couldn't make it into the alley for warmth. Most of them had red decorations or flowers on their coats or blouses. Peter Kence suspected these were prostitutes and said to my father

Pawlie, I think we have professional women here.

What do you mean, professional?

That they earn their money by virtue of their gender, Pawlie. For an hour or so, they will be your wife.

My father had noticed the women, too. One had looked him in the eye, glanced downward toward her feet, and when he looked there she lifted her dress to mid-calf. Nothing about this surprised him, but he was concerned that where there were such women, there would be crime, and he put his hand on his roll of German cash.

Their rooming house was on a larger street that the alley ended at. They climbed the stairs and knocked on the door. A stout woman in many layers of clothes came to the door and asked their names. The guide had told them this was the question they would be asked, and they had prepared with his help a card with their names spelled in western letters. She took the card and went to a desk, opened a ledger, and matched the names. She smiled at them when she got up and saying many cheerful things, led them up the stairs to the very top of the building where she showed them a large room but with a low ceiling that sloped downward to a window above the street. There was a curtain down the middle of the room, and on each side was a small bed. They threw their bundles down and she showed them the toilet. My father pantomimed washing under his arms, and the woman laughed and took them down one flight of stairs to a room with a large bathtub and a stove with buckets on it with a sink with running water. There were towels in a cupboard, and large bars of a very hard soap. My father thought he had gone long enough without bathing, even though it wasn't customary in those days to bath very often at all.

Neither had appreciated that the rooming house they were in had appointments more in keeping with a fancier hotel than a simple rooming house. The woman who kept the house worked only with the more reputable

eastern agents, and she wanted her reputation to work in her favor. She had come from a wealthy family, but her husband had died from apoplexy around the turn of the century. This was their house, and it still had many of the fixtures of a wealthy family's.

Back upstairs, Peter Kence said he wanted to nap, and my father took his change of clothes and went downstairs to the bath room. Immediately he noticed there was no way to completely close the door—there was not even a latch of any sort, and the door naturally fell open by a couple of inches. But he hadn't noticed any other guests while coming up the stairs, so he thought he and Peter Kence and the large, cheerful and motherly woman were the only people in the rooming house. My father stoked the coal-burning stove and put on 3 buckets of very cold water and waited. There was a small window at the far end of the room, and he pulled a stool over and watched the people below. He wasn't yet used to seeing so many people on the streets—Teremcy had few people and the streets were really mud and dirt roads. Podilsky was larger, but not like this—and certainly nothing like Berlin. He didn't engage his mind much, but just let the city flow in. The language was jarring to him, but he was starting to appreciate its beauty, too. After about 20 minutes, the water was hot.

He poured in the hot water and added a lot of cold water to get the temperature to be hot but bearable. He stripped off and gently lowered himself into the tub. He lathered himself and worked the soap over his body, which was unexpectedly sore from the trip—now that he could take the time to notice how he felt he felt it. The soap was unusually harsh, he thought, even for soap in Teremcy, and it lathered poorly and it hurt his skin, almost as if some sort of grit were in it.

The last was to wash his hair. He lathered a washcloth as well as he could and soaped his head. Then he used his fingertips, and he could feel dirt and sand at his scalp, and when he looked at his hands he could see the soot. He took a bucket and rinsed his hair and decided to wash it a second time. When his head was most covered with the lather and his eyes were closed he heard a voice

Oh. Oh, pardon me.

The voice spoke Russian

I'm sorry, I didn't know someone was in here.

The voice was a woman's.

My father swiped the suds from his eyes and looked toward the voice, expecting to see the cheerful mistress of the house, but at the same time he saw the woman in the doorway he realized that the cheerful mistress didn't speak perfect Russian with an educated and almost regal manner.

His second thought was to cover himself, as much for himself as for the woman. Her hand was to her face. She was young and dark-haired, dark-eyed, with thick but trimmed eyebrows. Her skin was dark—she must have been from the south, close to Arabia, he thought, perhaps from Georgia. She wore a robe that was wrapped tightly on her shape, which was womanly. She was not tall, but thin despite her curves and shapes, and she was young—younger than my father.

He reached quickly for the towel on the stool next to the tub. The woman said

Oh please. You think I haven't seen a man before. I have brothers, several of them. And I've been to the farm and seen what you use it for. I won't look if that's important to you. I won't look there.

My father said, Miss, I believe you should return to your room and wait till I'm done.

Ukrainian, she said. I'm Ukrainian too.

She switched to Ukrainian—a small difference, but a different accent and some different words. A more relaxed language. She laughed, but quietly and in what he thought was as elegant manner.

You must be for the Pennsylvania? To go to New York? I believe everyone in this rooming house is waiting for that boat to sail. Sail—how silly of me—to depart. It's a steamship, you know. Actually, a diesel ship, fueled by coal, like that stove.

My father was not expecting a conversation to unfold. Not with him sitting there naked in a bathtub with a young woman—a very young woman—standing not 3 feet away. He wasn't raised in a prudish way, but modesty was common in his home.

Yes, I am waiting. I and my companion, Peter Kence, who is upstairs sleeping.

Kence. A French name. Is he French.

No, Polish, I think, but he lives in Kamenetz-Podilsky.

Farming region. I've been there.

He isn't a farmer. His father owns a woman's clothing shop.

Um. Very interesting. Are you from Podilsky, as well?

No, Teremcy—to the south of Podilsky—on the Dniester. I am a farmer. And a work in metal, also.

Um. More interesting. I am Kalyna Ivanoiva Truss. I was born in Odessa, but I've lived in Kiev and Moscow. I most recently was in Lvov, and I came here by train a few days ago to travel to America. New York. My brothers have sent for me because they believe there is more opportunity for women like me there than in Russia, though it seems that here in Germany there are many things a woman can do that she couldn't do elsewhere.

My father was not able to understand everything she was saying, she spoke so quickly, and her accent was a little foreign. She slipped in and out of Russian. But most of all, what she was saying didn't make sense. She lived all those places? She was moving where there were more opportunities for women? A woman could live anywhere and be a good wife and helper. She could work some jobs to earn money or barter.

Do you have a name? Or is sitting there naked made it impossible for you to speak?

Oh. Powell Alexandrovich Sanuk.

Pawlie. How sweet. When you finish your beauty treatment, I'll bathe as well. Then perhaps we can take supper? You and your companion, Peter Kence?

I...I should ask him, first.

Who would refuse to dine with a young woman like me? You are in the garret?

Uh, yes, we are.

Meet me in the parlor at 7:30. I'll be the one in fur.

The whole time they spoke, my father only glanced at her a few times. He turned toward her to answer, and he saw her walking out the door, the robe spread tightly on her hips. She paused and gave her sophisticated laugh before pulling the door as closed as it could be.

My father was less pained when he told me this story. He said he didn't think about the conversation in any detail—he didn't replay it in his head—but he felt happy when she left. Not because she left, but because she had something he had never experienced in a person. A quick wit, an experience of the world, an opinion. She was not a follower. And there were things about her that were a mystery. I've always thought he fell in love with her at that moment, but the story he told isn't as clear as that. Something happened to him emotionally, but was it love?

These are the facts about Kalyna Truss. She was the daughter of a lawyer who worked in the Tsar's offices. She was educated at a private academy and had studied literature and art. She was learning photography and hoped to work for a large newspaper or magazine. She was 17 or 18 years old—my father was 20 at the time. She spoke Russian, French, a fair bit of English, and some German. French was considered by her father's generation as the most civilized language in the world, and so all well-educated children of the Russian elite spoke French almost as well as they spoke Russian. She spoke Ukrainian, as well—her first language, but not the first she relied on in conversation. My father found these things out in Hamburg.

My father quickly towed off, ran a comb through his hair, and went back upstairs. He woke Peter Kence.

A woman—a girl—came into my bath.

What are you saying? A woman?

Yes, and we had a fine conversation. She's invited us for supper at 7:30. She's a little younger than us.

You work fast for a farmer from the deep regions of the Ukraine.

I didn't do any work. I hardly said a word. She took charge of the conversation.

7:30. We have 2 hours. I'll need to bathe.

She's in there now, I think. Wait an hour.

Peter Kence had a good pocket watch. He set it whenever they were in a town. He set it at the train station in



Hamburg. Peter Kence could probably tell my father was agitated by the encounter. He perhaps was puzzled my father wasn't more interested than he was in the romantic possibilities with the girl.

Peter Kence went downstairs a few times after waiting an hour. And one of the times, the room was empty, and he took a bath, finishing about 7:20 by his pocket watch. While Peter Kence bathed, my father washed his clothes in the bath room, using a bucket of hot water and the hard soap. He would be ready for his next change of clothes.

They decided to meet Kalyna as she suggested, but as they were heading downstairs my father said to Peter Kence that she would likely not be there. When they got to the parlor, there she was, in a fur coat and a fur hat. My father introduced them,

Kalyna Truss, I'd like you to meet Peter Kence.

Enchanté, Monsieur Kence, she said.

Enchanté, Mademoiselle Truss.

Peter Kence explained that his French was poor, and they switched to Ukrainian/Russian. Peter Kence asked her about her last name, which was not a common Ukrainian name by any means. Kalyna explained that it was a Galician name, and that her family was originally from Lvov. The name served her father well, she said, because it meant coward, and what better way to throw off an adversary in court than by being thought a coward.

Of course, the name doesn't mean that directly, and the adversary doesn't realize his error, but my father had found it works well, she said.

Peter Kence was impressed she knew his father's line was French.

Shall we be off? I know a good French restaurant only a few blocks away. It's not been crowded that I've seen, and I've eaten there once and the food was excellent.

Then she went toward the door and opened it for Peter Kence and my father. Not common, they both thought.

She walked between them, and as they made their way through the dusky Hamburg streets, she told them she was on her way to New York—on the same boat as them—and her intention was to become a magazine photographer in New York. Her oldest brother was there—a lawyer himself in Manhattan—and he could perhaps introduce her to some editors once she developed a portfolio. They didn't really understand what she was talking about, and they had never heard of Manhattan. Was it in America? Or possibly Canada—they had heard that many Ukrainians emigrated to Canada. But they let her talk.

Soon they were at the restaurant, and she arranged a table back in a corner near the hearth. It was warm there. The tables were made of heavy wood and the chairs as well. There was a candle in the middle of the table. She sat with her back to the wall, and they sat on either side of her, leaving one side of the table open for the waiter. While they waited, my father was able to look at her more closely. She wore a light brown blouse and a dark skirt. Over the blouse was a small vest or something like that. Her hair came down to her shoulders, and was a dark black, almost blue but when light struck it the highlights were red. Her eyes were quick and bright. She had a long scar down the right side of her face—it was hidden mostly by her hair. Her hair had a loose curl to it, so that it seemed as though her hair were not well brushed. When she smiled she looked 25 or 30; when she looked serious or melancholy, she looked 12 or 13. She asked them each to tell her about why they were going to America.

My father was surprised by what Peter Kence said. Peter Kence said,

My father doubted I could make a good living on my own without relying on his money and influence to get me started. Several years ago I learned a trade—machinist. And now I am planning to make my own way in a new country where my family is not known. My brother is already there to help me get started, but I plan to work hard all my life and get to a position where I can retire in a paradise. I will prove to my family that I'm not a leech on them but can take care of myself and my own family. I will find a wife in America, and my father in the old country will be proud.

Good for you, Kalyna said. I know you will succeed in your plan. You have the combined souls of France and Poland, both deeply passionate. You will get your art from France and your mind from Poland. It will be the perfect combination.

My father sat there in disbelief.

And what you, Pawlie?, Kalyna asked my father.

It's not easy to explain. Like Peter I am trying to prove to my father that I can take care of myself. That I am not a lazy son. One difference is that my father passed away a few years ago. He set up our family so that I served my older brother, and must do so until his family is established. It's just my brother and mother on the farm. They are able to get by alone now with the help of the boys in the village, so I thought I would get a start on my life earlier than fate was playing out back home. I would have had to find a patron to farm his land, and in America, I can have my own land.

You are not leaving anyone else?, Kalyna asked.

There is a girl. Olena. Once I have a place in America, I will send for her.

And she will make the same journey you did? How was that journey?

My father looked at Peter Kence and didn't know how to answer it.

It was not easy so far, Peter Kence said. We were traveling with a friend of mine, and we lost him along the way. I mean that he disappeared. We don't know whether he was harmed or simply decided to go off on his own. We had some other difficulties, but Powell here got us out of them easy enough. He'd like an older brother. An older and bigger brother.

I see, Kalyna said. Pawlie is a hero, and you are his supporter. What do they call them in America? Sidekick. She said an English word they didn't know. Peter Kence picked up on it immediately.

We need to learn some English before we get to America. Enough to get us to Peabody, Massachusetts, where my brother lives. Could you teach us?

I can try, Monsieur Kence. I am not fluent in English, but I can speak it enough to get around a city, I think. I got good enough to be able to read some simple books from America. Enough to learn something about the culture.

You seem to have learned many things, Kalyna, my father said.

Oh, you see there is not a very nice reason for that. My family is wealthy, and as a girl, I don't need to work to earn my keep at home. Therefore, I had a lot of time to study and read. And not many are permitted—under our shameful system in Russia and the Ukraine—to attend schools as I have.

With that, the conversation dropped off. The waiter came, and Kalyna Truss ordered for them, in French. She ordered a decent French red wine to have with their meat dishes, and the waiter brought the bottle, opened it, and let it sit open before they drank.

First a appetizer of snails for them all and some oysters for Kalyna. Then a soup course. Finally pork dishes with asparagus and mashed potatoes. Finally a tart for each of them, and a plate of cheese. My father had never eaten like that, and Peter Kence only rarely.

As they ate, my father watched Kalyna carefully. He didn't know how to treat her: she was not a usual Ukrainian woman, and so chivalry directed downward was not appropriate. Nor was she a noble woman in the usual sense. She did not act regally, and she was younger by some years. She carried herself like a very assured, older man—not older by many years, but older than Peter Kence and my father. She seemed worldly, and sophisticated, as if there was nothing life could throw at her that would knock her off her feet. But he noticed something. Whenever the conversation lapsed, and they were busy eating and it seemed the two men were not watching her, her face grew unsure—a little weak even. She would drop years from her demeanor at that point, and she seemed to be a very young girl on a long journey, confident only because her Tato had stepped away only for a moment, and he would return with his command of the world and all would be right. Her face showed him that she needed that man to be there, and when he wasn't she was able to pretend to be him.

Still, she was joy to be with. My father wished his crude manners would not betray him to be the rube her felt with her. It didn't occur to him to think of her as a potential romance. She was at times much older than him, and at others like a little girl, and neither was proper for a man in his position. It was clear to him that she was greatly better educated than either him or Peter Kence. And so there was a peculiar sort of balance between

them—her weakness as a woman and her strength as an intellectual. This was how it seemed to my father then. We wouldn't think that way today. Would we?

My father asked her, How did you come to learn photography?

Ah, my father is well connected, and he managed to show some of my primitive black and white photographs to a remarkable Russian photographer, Sergei Prokudin-Gorsky. He is not so well known, yet, but he has a very remarkable technique for making color photographs. Yes, that's right. He does not color them by hand as others do, but has a way of capturing the different colors on glass plates. He has been photographing churches around Russia and the Ukraine. My father arranged—after Mr Gorsky agreed I had talent to develop—for me to spend two summers working with him as an apprentice. I cannot approach his skill level and talent, but I can take a good photograph from time to time. My equipment will be loaded onto the Pennsylvania and I hope to develop a portfolio in Manhattan.

Manhattan, where is that, my father asked.

Kalyna covered her mouth and laughed her elegant and sophisticated laugh. Manhattan is the name of the main part of New York. It's an island, really. The larger area known as New York to the rest of the world is a group of nearby towns. There's Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn, Astoria, Yonkers, and Staten Island, I think. You would call all of them together New York. But Manhattan is the center.

When dinner was over, and they had had their desserts and cheese, and the after dinner drinks had been served, commented on, and drunk, Kalyna announced that it was time for her to return to the rooming house. Frau Laubsch would be worried about any of her young ladies being out too late.

You seen the whores, haven't you, Kalyna asked.

Flustered, only Peter Kence was able to answer.

Why yes, Mademoiselle, we did see some on our way to the rooming house today after we arrived. We have no interest in them, I'm sure.

Yes, of course. I was merely about to point out that whores are a reliable sign of a bad neighborhood. And this is what Frau Laubsch is concerned about. Apparently the section has turned bad in the years since her husband passed away.

My father noticed that when he was speaking to Kalyna, Peter Kence's speaking manner improved. Apparently Peter Kence was speaking in a more common manner to him, perhaps because my father was less well educated. My father felt inferior to both of them after he realized this. Peter Kence could come close to talking to Kalyna in her terms. My father couldn't.

When the dinner bill arrived, Kalyna quickly picked it up, even though it was placed in front of Peter Kence. She said, My father has provided me quite a substantial allowance for my travel to America, and I suspect neither of you are traveling heavily with cash. I expect you've wired ahead your money to, where was it, Peabody.

They felt like small boys out with their rich aunt. The waiter was only a little surprised. No doubt he could just the quality of cloth.

Kalyna stood and waited. My father and Peter Kence also stood, but it was Peter Kence who went to the coat hook and retrieved her fur coat and hat. She then turned slightly away from him, and this time without any delay, he moved to put the coat onto her outstretched hands behind her. She pulled a scarf from her large purse and wrapped her delicate neck. Then she placed the fur hat on her head, and adjusted her hair and it for best effect.

Gentlemen, she said.

They walked outside and saw that it had clouded over and it was snowing lightly. The city had a system of streetlights which shown yellow in the night air. The light snow put small halos around each light, and the melted snow in the cobbled streets reflected small replicas of each light. My father watched as Kalyna stopped to look at the street and the lights. She moved her head, and then she moved to one side, and then the other, always looking up and then down at the cobbles.

This would make a good photo, if only the chemicals could work faster to capture the crispness of the light in the reflections, the air is so still. This is a perfect picture of Hamburg on a winter night. My father looked in the

direction she was looking. He looked at her smile as she studied the setting, and he looked again at the cobbled street. He could see the colors and how they played together, the yellow against the dark grey and black. The water between the cobbles reflected perfectly the delicate metalwork in the lamps, and even the small flickers were perfectly mirrored. He could see the mood of their evening in the lights. For just a second he could. Then perhaps it passed.

Soon they were back at the rooming house. Kalyna stepped into the parlor and the men followed. She said I need to get some sleep. But first, would you mind if I had a word in private with Mr Sanuk?

Peter Kence shook his head no, said his goodnight, and went upstairs. Frau Laubsch looked into the parlor and greeted them all.

When the others left, Kalyna said to my father

Tomorrow, if it's not contrary to any plans you have, I would like you to join me for a small breakfast at a café I know not far away. There is something I wish to speak to you about. Apart from the suave Mr Kence. He is certainly a gentleman, but there is something I need to ask you before we get on the boat. I'm certain when we can speak before then, so I thought I would ask for an early appointment.

My father ran some scenarios in his mind, and few of them were plausible.

What time?

About 9am. I will be down here at that time, and perhaps in the dining nook over there taking a tea with Frau Laubsch. She speaks a bit of Russian—did you know that? So many Russians and Ukrainians going through her rooming house, she's learned quite a bit of it. But 9am, is that all right?

It's all right. I'll come down then or around then.

My father could reliably wake at dawn, which he was certain would be before 9am. He was not a by-the-clock man. They said goodnight, and he watched her ascend the stairs. He back moved like a snake's as she climbed up them, their ascenders a little too high for comfortable stairs, he thought. They emphasized how differently men and women walked. Until the moment she turned away to go upstairs, she held the older, womanly face on her—she was smiling and confident, as if she knew something that would change your life once you knew it. But just as she turned, before the darkness wrapped her face, he could see she reverted to the young girl. She had a look of concentration, but more like a schoolgirl encountering a puzzle.

My father told me these thoughts quite explicitly—they aren't part of the story I've put around what he told me that night. And he told me that he noticed that since the minute he met her in the bath, he began to notice more keenly, and to see how people thought and why they acted. As if people suddenly became three dimensional after being sketches or cartoons in a newspaper.

It's as if, he said, the one-eyed man suddenly saw with two.

## Maybe Singing

My father stopped his story and laid back, closed his eyes. I wasn't sure whether it was from fatigue or from the effect the story had on him. I asked whether he had ever told this story to anyone else, and he said he's told part of it to some people, to Nana for example, but he said he left out parts. I asked which parts, and he said he didn't need to say what they were—they should be clear to anyone.

I offered some more ice, but he didn't want any. The nurse came by, perhaps because the storytelling had stopped—her station was not far away, and my father spoke in broken sentences. The words he actually told me—if I were to write them down they'd take up only about a dozen pages. I've had a lot of time to go over this story in my mind, and I've added a lot of detail to it—I didn't change anything, but I needed to make it a full story, like something you'd read in a book.

At that time I didn't realize how serious his injuries were. I didn't know he was about to die—that he could die while telling me the story. But he seemed to know, and he seemed to know he had to get the story past, at least, Kalyna Truss.



My father went upstairs, climbing the stairs slowly. He stopped at every floor to think about what Kalyna Truss wanted to talk about. Certainly he built up his expectations beyond the sensible. Certainly he was taken with her—who wouldn't be. He wasn't sure which floor she was on, and possibly he hoped to run into her as she made her way to the toilet. Or he would hear her voice, maybe singing. Sometimes, though, you couldn't connect a singing voice with a speaking voice.

Peter Kence was waiting for him, lying on his bed like Cleopatra, his head propped on his hand, on his side watching the doorway. The stoves and fireboxes throughout the rooming house emptied their heat into this garret, and it was very warm. Peter Kence was in his undershirt and undershorts.

So what's her pleasure? You?

She wants to meet for breakfast.

That's it?

Yes, that's all. Just me. Not the two of us.

Ah, she's working up the courage.

A girl like that? No, certainly not.

My father got undressed and sat on his bed on the other side of the curtain from Peter Kence.

I didn't know you were French.

I'm not. I'm Polish. My father's grandfather is from France, and Kence is a French name. We all learn some French when we're children.

It didn't escape Miss Truss. It's as if she had been talking to your father right before supper last night.

I was quite surprised. People don't usually pick up on the details of nationality like that.

To sleep, my father said, ending the conversation.

That night he had a dream in which he was about to go to sleep in his house on the farm. His mother and brother were in their sleeping rooms, and he was just about to get undressed. Kalyna Truss appeared and said it was time for her to go to sleep too, and would he like to join her at her country home overlooking the Dniester? As she made the suggestion, she lay down on his bed, on her side like Peter Kence had done, and he lay down facing her, on his side, and put his arm on her hip with his hand on her thigh. She was wearing a green tunic and a narrow dark green skirt. He said to her, Yes, let's do that.

It wasn't much of a dream, and it was filled out with delaying details, such as him needing to feed the pigs first and wash out the cow stalls. But the whole time, Kalyna Truss followed him and didn't say a word while he explained everything he needed to do before heading for her country home, her *dacha*.





He woke with a start. The sky showed the beginning of dawn. Far to the east the clouds were a blanket above them and a light was warming up between it and the earth bed. Had he been able to watch, he'd have seen the underside of the clouds turn yellow orange. It would be a good day, the sky portended.

Sneaking over to Peter Kence's side of the room, my father picked up his watch and it said 8:25. He was surprised it was so late, but he didn't usually use timepieces, and though he knew the sunrise changed throughout the year, he didn't think it would be this late. He didn't think about—or know about—the fact that Hamburg was to the north of Teremcy and that this made a difference. He thought the sunrise happened at the same time everywhere.

But he was not late. He went to the toilet, which had a small sink, and he cleaned up a little fro breakfast before dressing. This wasn't his practice, but a woman like Kalyna Truss demanded it in his mind.

He dressed and went downstairs. He could hear Kalyna Truss's voice coming from another room nearby. He looked around and found the little dining nook where Kalyna Truss and Frau Laubsch were talking and drinking tea. Shy, he didn't say anything, and after a few minutes Kalyna Truss looked his way.

Oh, there you are.

She pulled a watch out of her purse and said, And not even late. My, my.

And to Frau Laubsch she said, We're off. There's a nice French café nearby. Time to teach our farmish friend about the larger world.

She stood and they left.

They walked down the street in silence. The day had broken and the air was consumed with the odor of horse manure. My father noticed that the street they were on was an unbroken yellow brown; it was one of the main streets in the section. As if in a maze of twisty passages all alike, they turned down one alley after another, though my father didn't feel as if they were going very far as the crow flies. With all the turns, he let Kalyna Truss lead the way. This was when he noticed that the narrow skirt he thought she was wearing was actually a pair of pants—a very baggy pair, made of a silky light material, dark green, and translucent. Underneath her legs were covered by a tighter pair of black or very dark pants. She wore black boots. She had on a white tunic, and her fur coat and fur hat. He was surprised by her attire, but no one seemed to be looking at her. He was more surprised by that. Kalyna Truss was in her late-20s elegant beautiful woman form this morning. But perhaps it was too early, too cold, too much of winter for the Hamburgers.

They arrived. She opened the door and pointed to a table near the window, it would be cold there, my father thought. She went to the counter. He watched her pointing to different things in the case. He heard a loud steam sound, like a machine getting ready to move. The air held the aroma of coffee, he could tell, but it was a strong, bitter smell. Without any conscious thought he watched her hips as she moved from one leg to the other as she pointed at this, pointed at that. He could hear her tone of voice but not the words as she asked questions, and the slick-haired man answered in a womanly tone of voice.

She came back with a tray covered with plates of baked goods—pastries he figured. Some with sliced nuts clinging to their sides, some with a white paste in the middle, some with a dark paste coming out a hole in one end. All with some kind of shiny glaze on them. She unloaded the plates and turned back to the counter. In a minute or two she returned with two small cups on small saucers, with small handles, like a child's play tea set. On each saucer next to the cup were two white, irregular cubes and a tiny spoon. She placed one in front of him. Looking down he saw an unexpected pattern in brown and white foam, like the foam on new milk. In the middle were two hearts made of a dark power or granules, with white centers made of foam. The bottom of one heart fit into the indentation of the top of the other—one heart above the other, intersecting at one's point and the other's gap. He looked and she had the same pattern.

You can add the sugar cubes, if you like—I don't. It's called a cappuccino. It's an Italian espresso drink.

Espresso? Cappuccino? He decided not to ask for further explanations. He asked simply

It's coffee, right?

Yes, it's coffee, but coffee as made by the gods.

He hadn't thought of God drinking coffee, but he had heard that coffee was very popular in Arabia, and that's where Jesus lived, so it made a difficult kind of sense to him. She explained the pastries. Tarts, Danish, Marzipan, almonds, chocolate, croissant. He listened as if listening to an orchestra playing a song—sure someone could make sense of the sounds, but to him just beautiful sounds. To eat them, he mimicked Kalyna Truss. What else could a man from the farm do?

The coffee was very strong for him, and he realized that foam was milk and the dark granules nutmeg. The machine he heard, he now figured out, made the milk foam by injecting steam into it. He started to tell this to Kalyna Truss, but she shushed him and then sat there looking down at her cup.

What I wanted to talk about, she started.

She had turned into the 13-year-old girl at that point. She looked up out at the alleyway. Men walked by carrying long boards by twos.

You probably think I'm a totally independent woman. And it's true I have learned a lot about the world from books, magazines, and some travel. I seem confident to you, but as you know, I'm 17. This is not a lot younger than you, but I am also a woman. We are about to embark on a long sea voyage. I've never been on a large boat—on a ship, and the idea of being hundreds of miles from land is not comfortable for me. But that's not the important thing. The ship will be filled with men who are accustomed to women behaving a certain way, in a timid way around them. I am young, and I'd say I was rather nice looking.

She looked up at him and smiled for a half second.

And I'm afraid of the things that could happen. To a woman...like me. Then there's New York. My brother will be in Washington when I arrive—that's their capital city, and it's far from New York, and I need to get from the boat to his home. I am comfortable in European cities, but the people who have left for America from Europe are the ones who are accustomed to rough action and taking what they need. What they want. But that's still not the important thing.

At this point she grew quiet. She took a small bite from the least sweet of the pastries and then sipped her cappuccino, leaving a white crescent of foam on her upper lip. My father was watching her closely, and sometimes looking up at the others in the café, surely wondering what kind of devilish things the two of them were talking about in their private and strange language.

She continued, My father isn't sending me to New York. He doesn't even know where I've gone. I haven't talked to him in months. My brother has sent me the money I have. Everything else is true: I want to try to become a photographer, my father and brother are lawyers, I've had the education I said I have, and Kalyna Truss is my real name. But my father doesn't support the idea of a woman becoming totally independent. For a time, to impress potential husbands to improve the standing of the family. My education and wit are the tail feathers on a peacock.

My father didn't know what sort of bird she was talking about. But he understood her point.

I'm the lure. I'm the bait that will bring a member of the tsar's family into the Truss family. Actually, the other way around. By bringing me home into his bed, some man will also bring the Trusses. Can you imagine how this feels. They might as well have dressed me up like one of the whores you saw yesterday. And he ignores the signs. The tsar won't last long. And if his plan succeeds, neither will the Trusses. I ran away, and I suspect he will send someone after me.

She took another sip. A request would come next.

I watched you closely yesterday, Pawlie, and I could see you watching intently. Not just me, but the people around us. Even Peter Kence, you were watching him. You are watching for danger, and I believe you have the instruments to avoid it or escape it. Or defeat it. I'm not certain, but I believe your trip from Teremcy was not a pleasure ride. I've heard people from that region need to cross the border on foot, and that's why you didn't take the train from Podilsky. You didn't tell me the whole story of the trip. I could hear you skipping parts, using general terms when your inclination is to tell the story. Something happened. Maybe something violent. But you are here and you escaped or avoided the danger by being vigilant, and perhaps by fighting back. Peter Kence

is not vigilant like you. I want you to be my guardian in a way. I want you to keep me from danger on this trip, especially here in Hamburg. And I would like you to take me to my brother's home. It's in the north part of Manhattan. In exchange, I'll teach you and Peter Kence English. Not much English, because I don't know it so well myself. But enough for you to get to Peabody, Massachusetts. There are some details to work out, if you agree to help. Will you help me? Pawlie?

My father didn't wait long to answer. He answered with a question,

I will if you will answer me one question.

What's the question. Yes, I agree.

What are you wearing? Are those pants?



## Harem Pants Burn Bright

Harem pants, she answered. A designer in Paris is trying to make them popular again. I put this pair together myself. They're supposed to be Arabic, but I like how comfortable they are. I have riding pants on underneath them. Does this mean you'll help me?

My father most likely understood the words she said, but the details didn't make any sense. He couldn't connect them to what he knew in his life or what he had read. To him Kalyna Truss must have seemed like a tornado whose inner parts are impossible to ever observe, and he must have been buffeted by her outer edge of theatrics.

I can do what I can. I mean, I can try, my father said.

Good.

She sat quietly finishing her breakfast. He ate what he could, but the meal was also a puzzle to him. He was used to a more full-bodied meal at breakfast, because the day was filled with hard and heavy work. These Europeans must have an easier day than he had at the farm. The French, anyway.

When they were finished, Kalyna Truss said.

I know. Follow me.

She led them through the streets as usual, but suddenly they came upon a lake. Around the lake near where they were stood some tall and impressively stout buildings. He had seen ponds and such in towns before, but nothing like this. She stopped when she noticed he had and waited for him, looking back at him and then back to the lake.

It's called Binnentalster Lake.

They headed for a bench near the water. Some swans were floating nearby, and an old couple was feeding them pieces of stale bread. They sat down and Kalyna Truss adjusted her coat for maximum warmth. Silently they watched the swans and old couple. He saw that the lake went under a bridge at the far end and that part of the lake seemed even larger. Around the lake were buildings of various sizes. It looked like there were restaurants with outdoor seating now wrapped for the winter. My father wondered whether he was expected to keep watch over her every moment or only while they were on the move? Would her father's people be likely to come up to her now? She didn't dress like the locals—she was much more colorful and her beauty could be considered both extreme and exotic in the city they were in now. She stood out. And what about the boat? Would he need to watch her there? And what about in the rooming house here? It was a known stop on at least one well-known trail to America.

Should I be watching now?, he asked.

Two things: Probably not. My father doesn't know my plan—he doesn't know anything about what I'm doing, and he might not even know yet that I'm running away. Second, you always are watching. Knowing that you should be watching for people looking for me is enough. We can talk about it later. Let's be quiet for a while.

They sat. The swans finished with the bread and the couple walking away moved down the lakefront looking for more food or a place to settle in. A small sail boat moved across the back end of the lake near the bridge. Behind them they heard the sounds of conversation and cooking. Preparations for lunch. He had sat down at the end of the bench, and from that position he could glance at her while appearing to be looking down one side of the lake. He saw that she was looking mostly out at the lake and the swans and ducks. There were a couple of boats with old men steering them across the cold water. Carts were crossing the far bridge. Kalyna Truss was in her 13-year-old self, not smiling, not animated, timid and fragile, my father thought. She was likely afraid of what might happen to her. She had just revealed her fears, and they must have remained in her mind. But it was only her father she was afraid of. And if he had educated her at such expense, that must mean he loved her—or was the story about him calculating her value to the family really the serious part of the truth. My father was simply puzzled. He heard footsteps behind them and he turned to look—another old couple.

He noticed she had put her gloved hands between her legs and was looking down at the ground at her feet. He took this to be a sign of fear or apprehension, and he asked

Are you all right?

Yes. I'm cold. Will you warm my hands?

She slid closer to him and offered her hands to him. The gesture was antiseptic, and so without even thinking he took her hands in his. He placed her palms together, and then he put his much larger hands around hers. They were slightly turned toward each other, but they looked out toward the lake. The sun was on their backs, and they weren't bitterly cold. When they had grown comfortable with the arrangement, she loosened her arm muscles and slid even closer to him so she was facing more forward. She was leaning toward the lake a little.

You're right to think my fears are a little foolish. It's my father, after all. He doesn't wish me harm, and so I am not in danger, actually. Only the course of my life is at stake.

My father believed in this way their positions were the same, but his father would not send anyone after him. His brother had given up the chance to stop him. Or he believed that anyway. His mother most likely didn't know her role in his leaving. That was ok. Why wish her to feel bad. It was over for them in his mind.

When we are on the ship, we will be safe from my father trying to get me back. Mostly. But on the ship I fear being robbed or taken advantage of. I am a young, single woman, thus a tempting target. A problem will be that I will be in first class and you in steerage, most likely.

Steerage. He hadn't heard that word before. He didn't know what it meant, but it sounded demeaning.

Steerage?

Yes, third class. It shouldn't be terrible for you, but most of the poor passengers will be in steerage. It's the lowest parts of the inhabited boat. There will be a number of people per compartment. There won't be much privacy for the trip.

I don't know what class we are. I didn't think there was any such thing.

Don't worry. There are no barriers between third and first class as long as I tell them we are together. I can say we are relatives of different means who happen to be on the same boat.

Different means. My father didn't know what this meant, but it sounded like a class difference. The word must not be a coincidence. They were both tsarists, but she was close to the tsar and he was close to the tsar's pigs.

We will need to eat together often, and you need to be seen in or near by cabin. This will keep anyone away. You're so big, they will be afraid to come for me.

My father tried to imagine these things, but he had a poor idea of what the boat would be like. He probably thought of a sailing ship.

They were quiet.



My father noticed that her hip was against his. She still had her little girl face on, so he didn't think further about it. After a while she said

My hands are still cold. Here, let me try this.

Without waiting for his assent, she removed her gloves and put her small hands up his sleeves—about halfway to his elbows. She held his arms in her palms. Her hands were cold. She kept looking down, but now it was toward his feet. He looked behind her down the lake's edge. The swans were floating still, right next to each other.

I'm certain my father was thinking about how cold she was.

Shall we return to the rooming house.

No, oh no. We are safer here, and we can sit with each other here without any suspicion.

She shivered once.

Here, he said.

He removed her hands from his sleeves, rotated himself toward her, then reached out and pulled her close to him. He pushed her hands in close to her chest, and then wrapped his arms around her back. He had her enclosed in his chest. This pulled her face close to his but lower down, and he could feel her nose on the bottom of his jaw and it was cold. This confirmed—to him—that she had not planned a seduction scene and that it was ok for him to be holding her like this. Yes, it was ok. It didn't mean anything.

They talked for hours. She explained what books she liked, the places she'd been, what her family and friends were like. He talked about the farm, his family, Peter Kence, Olena, and parts of the trip so far. He told her that his dream was to be a literary man—maybe not a writer, but someone who nurtures them, and he told her how he had hoped to have a salon or a garret in Berlin or London where artists and writers would come to dine and debate. She immediately spoke of Samuel Johnson as a model, but my father didn't know who that was.

And as they talked he started to realize that his dreams were childish and shallow while hers were sophisticated and complex, that she had the background and foundation for her dreams where he didn't. She pointed to the lake at different times or to buildings and people and explained how she would approach taking photographs of those subjects. He would look and try to understand how she thought about it. And he would point to birds and other animals and suggest them as subjects, and sometimes she'd agree and talk about them, but other times she would laugh her special laugh. Not to degrade or diminish him, but almost as if it were a joke between them that he would make silly suggestions.

All the while she held on to him, or him on to her. She had her gloves on, but she would rest her hands on his legs or put them under his arms. He would take her hand sometimes when he was suggesting a subject.

He felt no intimacy barrier had been broken—that they had a casual closeness that was like a close brother and sister. She could see him looking carefully about. She would sometimes ask him about someone she had glimpsed behind them during one of her laughs as a subject for a photo, and she noticed he was aware of that person without looking back when she brought them up.

Where they were they could hear church bells and perhaps the city hall, and she could count out what time it was. When it was past noon—past 1—she said We should get lunch.

He was surprised because the time had gone so quickly. They strolled around the lake and found a restaurant on the water, and she ordered a fish and he decided to try schnitzel, having no good idea what it was—a veal schnitzel. The waiter brought fine breads, not overly cooked vegetables—at her request—and in the end there was espresso and tarts. My father couldn't help notice that his clothes didn't match hers in quality; that he was a hobo and she a courtesan. Kalyna Truss didn't seem to notice—never looked at him with anything other than an understated admiration or perhaps, just maybe, a hint of infatuation.

After lunch—which she paid for—they strolled around to the side of the lake with a small park, just a small stand of trees. From there they could see the seagulls circling above the boats that were coming in from fishing on the North Sea. Here also birds—pigeons—flocked and flew in loose formations, came walking in their necky way up to them. Looking for crumbs, she said.

As they sat there again playing their photographer game, he grew pensive and quiet. He was realizing that something was wrong about the two of them. She sat back and put on her 27-year-old face and began her lecture.

Pawlie, you're feeling bad. And I know what it is. We've been talking about ourselves all day—either telling our stories or talking about who we would try to make photographs from what we see here around this lake. And you have been hearing all my education talking, and you have but three years to put up against it, as if we were having a competition the ways that boys do. Now you don't believe me to be a boy, do you? No, I didn't think so. There is more to being a, oh let's see, let's call it an accomplished person than having an extensive—and expensive—education. There are brains, there's talent, ambition, hard work, and passion. Education is just one of them, and any couple of these things can be replaced by more in the others. You don't have a good education, but it isn't because you couldn't do it—it's because there was no more education for you to have. You have passion, you are smart, you are perceptive; certainly you can work hard, and I think you have talent. I think you are able to see. I know that you can notice things. I've been testing you all day on that. Yes, I have. If I'm going to trust you with keeping me safe, I need to know that you are able to do the job. I can notice things after I've stared at them; you notice things quickly. You can develop that into a strong talent. And your dreams of being a literary impresario—yes, that's the word for what you want to be—you could be a writer. You can tell a story. You need to learn language better—but that's a matter of reading more, and being with more people. Reading newspapers,

getting dictionary, paying attention. When you tell the story of Olena and leaving her behind, it's an emotional story and I got caught up in it. Your simple language helped that story. When you talked about looking for her house the morning you left on the train, it was heartbreaking. You are not my inferior. Not at all. Nothing like it. We are different, and I've had more education. Had I started with your talents, I would be world famous now. I would be on a stage. I would be a celebrated writer. I would be the best photographer who ever lived. You have a soul, and that's why I love you.



A mist came in that settled at the tops of the trees. It was a cold mist from the sea. It was time to return to the rooming house to rest before supper. With the mist and the hour, darkness began to surround them. He began to understand what she meant when she said that life was sculpted by light, and that light was everything art was about. He took off his gloves and turned to her, and he ran his hand through her hair. Her smile blended with the mist and disappeared slowly—not in departure but in transition. She looked closely at him. Then the moment flew away and she said

My hands are cold again. Here feel this.

And she removed the glove from her left hand, stood, and placed it in his right. She said

Let's go.

They walked together that way all the way back. She put her glove on only when they got to the steps to the rooming house.



I said to your grandfather, Tatu, what were you doing with that woman? Is this the story of your trip or is it a love story?

It's the story of my journey. It's the story of me. I'm telling you how you should live your life at the end of mine, and you need to know who is telling you that advice. You can decide whether to take it. Your mother will tell you stories about me when I am gone; stories of her and me. You cannot understand those stories and judge them without knowing me. Until now you've known me as a father, and a father had a duty to his daughter. Kalyna Truss's had a duty, and failed that duty. I haven't failed mine yet, but the last duty a father has to his children is to take off the mask that says Father on it and show the man. Only this way can the meaning of a man's life repair the world just a little as he's leaving it. You can know me by knowing Peter Kence and by knowing Kalyna Truss. And by knowing Olena, and knowing my mother and my father. And yes by knowing my wife—your mother—as best as that can be done. Until now we have been cartoons. You're old enough—you are 21 years old—to see past them. You are already the age I was when I met Kalyna. You are older. She was 4 years younger than you are now. People like Kalyna Truss are the fabric that makes up life. No, I didn't love her. No, I didn't not love her. She brought me halfway to what I am as a man. Kalyna Truss is the truth.

The truth. Tatu, please. She sounds like a tart. She sounds like a whore. She used you.

And if no one uses you. I mean no one. If no one ever uses you, then what did you live for? You were useless. You must be like the log. Vibrant in early life; once dried you must burn bright. To heat the passions of those who would use you. Burn bright, Helen.

## A Spark

My father had expected Kalyna Truss to lay out plans for the night and the next when they got back to the rooming house, but she didn't. She hardly said a word except good night. Then she pulled her coat off while she went upstairs. No smiling, no looking back down, as if she had walked into the rooming house alone. He stood just inside the door watching her walk away. As if nothing had happened that day. He went upstairs and Peter Kence was just waking from a nap.

Long day. Where were you all day?

I had breakfast with Kalyna, and then we went for a walk.

How romantic. Is there more to the story?

No, and what I just said seems to not even be part of the story.

What do you mean?

Nothing. Kalyna is Kalyna and there's no easy understanding her.

Supper. Are we having supper. With her?

We're having supper, but not with her. She's got other plans or doesn't want any.

A lover's spat. So soon?

Not a spat, just a man's mystery.

They dithered a bit and headed for dinner. They went back toward the train station where they believed the food was cheaper. Without the bourgeois pocketbook of Kalyna Truss they were relegated to train-station food. The cheaper and the more the better. On the way they passed through the streets of professional women, but they all seemed to be on a break. Or a convention on the other side of town.

They found a bar that served supper and they ordered a meat-intensive meal with lots of beer. They had a salad too, but it was mostly meat. This was not like the farm where they ate garlic, cabbage, and other vegetables and not as much meat—in fact, not much meat at all. When they did have meat, it was typically in the form of sausages like kielbasa, which they bought in the village. My father talked to Peter Kence about some of the arrangement with Kalyna Truss—but just the part where she had asked him to be vigilant on her behalf. The conversation didn't go very far, and that was fine with my father.

After sitting and sipping another round of beers, they started to walk back to the rooming house. This time the professionals were out in force. One of them—a rather busty but quiet black-haired woman—seemed to intrigue Peter Kence. He stopped and tried to ask her what her arrangement might be, but they found no common words. And all his attempts to pantomime cash were met only with head nodding in the assent. Peter Kence kissed her lightly on the cheek, took off his hat, and bowed, and they went on.

I'm sure it would have been too expensive. And there are other dangers too.

My father didn't say anything.

After turning down a few streets they came up an alley filled with small shops that were still open. Some had women's clothes and shoes, others sold sundries and confections. They went into a hat shop and tried some on. As they were coming out, my father thought he saw Kalyna Truss at the end of the street turning the corner onto the main thoroughfare. It was just her fur coat and hat, the general look of the woman's skin. My father said nothing to Peter Kence but headed for the street she had turned on with perhaps more haste than they had used thus far. When he got there and looked down the street, he thought he could see her, but he saw something else too. It looked like a man in a rough coat and workman's cap was following her. Walking about 20 feet behind and stopping now and then to look into windows or to adjust his jacket or cap; then he would look her way and hurry to catch up. My father hurried to catch up but without making his own scene.

Peter Kence—who normally would have made a fuss about the change in plans or pace—just followed behind. He probably didn't know what was going on, but he must have felt that my father's demeanor wasn't conducive to Peter's usually childish complaints. Or perhaps the night when Fred disappeared made more of a difference to Peter than even he realized. That night showed to both of them that the world wasn't especially interested



in their well being, and people would do what they would do in their own self interests or whatever motivated them. He simply followed.

After a couple of blocks, my father caught up with the man, but he stayed on the other side of the street and tried to keep someone directly between him and the man. My father used windows to watch the man in reflection—there was enough light in the street from streetlights and lights from shops and the apartments up above to see the man well enough. My father tried to verify that it was Kalyna, but the woman never was fully visible, and my father didn't want to alert the man to his presence.

He followed the man for a while, and he watched the woman he thought might be Kalyna—trying to see whether it was really her and also to make sure she was staying far enough away to be safe from this man. He also tried to get close enough to him to determine whether he was really following her or just appeared to be. He also didn't want to raise the suspicions of people on the street. He would drop back and allow the man to walk on ahead, and this way he thought he could see whether the man had an accomplice. And, God bless him, Peter Kence also stayed even farther behind to watch my father's safety—even though he didn't know what my father was doing, he could see he was trying to learn about the man in the rough coat and workman's hat.

My father, trailing behind at one point, watched the man stop and then look around until it was obvious that he was looking for the woman, because as soon as he spied her, he turned back to look at his own feet. At this point, my father decided to act. But he needed a plan.

He followed them for a few blocks, then he saw that the alley they were on emptied onto a larger street, and right at that intersection, two other streets veered off, forming a V. The intersection had 5 ways a person could walk, including the alley they were on. The woman was far enough ahead that my father believed that if he could delay the man long enough, she could disappear down one of the streets. He crossed to the far side of the alley and passed the man. Then when a group of woman passed the other way he crossed back over. He stopped about 20 feet ahead of the man, who had stopped and was looking into a small bar. Then he turned to look back down the way they had come, and my father used that opportunity to move quite close to the man. When he was done looking down the alley—or pretending to—he started to walk while turning toward the intersection. He walked right into my father.

My father realized then that the man was quite a bit smaller than he was, so my father decided to pretend to be upset. He started by saying *Duren*. When he got no reaction that hinted at recognition, he started talking to the man in a slightly raised voice. Not sure what to say, he lectured one of his cows:

You foolish cow! You've spending all day in the pasture eating the rye, shitting cowpies every 30 minutes, and chewing your cud. And now you come into the barn and expect good grain and me to milk you dry? Who is the boss here, you or me? And tomorrow you will expect the same thing. All you do is eat, shit, and produce milk. I do all the work. Are you not ashamed of your lazy life?

The man answered back in apologetic sounding German, and because my father didn't raise his voice or make any threatening gestures, he didn't get angry. But it took about two minutes. When it seemed enough time had passed, my father tipped his hat and shook the man's hand, as if he had accepted the man's apology and all was forgiven. My father smiled and laughed a bit, saying, I love cow's milk. I love how it paints a white mustache on my face.

The man smiled back and perhaps said, Then tomorrow it's pork chops!

My father walked back down the alley to Peter Kence, and the two of them apparently talking intently looked back up the alley and saw the man looking down all the streets. Then he headed down the main street to the left. Peter Kence, the woman in the fur hat when the other direction.

Do you think it wa Kalyna?

No, but it looked a lot like her.



At the rooming house later that evening, my father and Peter Kence spoke of the intervention.

I thought I saw Kalyna and a man following her. She asked me to be vigilant, and so I tried to figure out if the

man was a threat, and then I enabled her escape.

I figured it out after a while. Will you tell her about it?

No, why worry the girl? And I can't be certain the man was really following her. He didn't get upset with my bovine lecture.

Yes, I heard that. You taught him a lesson he'll never forget.

The next day, Kalyna was nowhere to be seen. When Peter Kence and my father came back from lunch, they asked Frau Laubsch about Kalyna, and she said Miss Truss spent most of the morning in the room and then went out soon after they did.

They went to the garret and took their rest. In 3 more days they would leave for America on the boat. They were eager for the trip to start but unsure of what it would be like. Neither had been on a large boat, and they didn't know anyone who had or read about it. Would it be like a train? Like a small boat, like the ones on the river? My father wished he had a better companion to take the trip with than Peter Kence. Peter Kence was nice enough, but this was not a journey that they would remember together fondly—more likely they would remember it as an adventure.

And what about Fred. They had hoped he would make it to Hamburg somehow, and because they were all three traveling with the same agent, they had hoped he would make it to the same rooming house.

That morning, after breakfast, my father and Peter Kence had walked down to the Elbe where they were all supposed to meet to get on the Pennsylvania. They walked around the docks for quite a while, and they didn't see any large boats, just small fishing boats and what looked like tugboats—short, stout, and pushy looking boats with a small structure at the front. There were gulls, so they knew they were near the sea, Peter Kence had remarked. My father had already noticed that with Kalyna Truss.

Maybe the Pennsylvania would come in later, they thought.

The sky clouded over and that night it snowed. They bought some meat, bread, and cheese and ate at the rooming house, in the little dining area, and my father hoped Kalyna Truss would come in the door or down the stairs, but she didn't. Frau Laubsch made some tea and brought some hard biscuits for a sort of dessert.

They went upstairs and slept.



The evening after Kalyna Truss failed to make a plan with my father, he thought it only fair that she had her own life and he had no reason to expect her to share every moment with him. When he took the effort to shield her from the man following her later that same evening, he believed that he had earned the right to be with her. To have her touching his hands while they talked. To have her sitting close by

And the next day after he had spent it entirely with Peter Kence walking around the docks, talking in the garret, eating in the nook, spending time with Frau Laubsch, he began to grow angry. Or that's what he thought. And that's what he told me that night.

But it wasn't anger. It was love and jealousy. He had fallen in love with Kalyna and he was jealous of the world for having her that evening and the next day. He was mad at her for keeping herself from him. He felt in his chest how strong this feeling was, but he couldn't tell it to me that night. Maybe he knew that eventually I would see this truth, or perhaps he was content for it to be a mystery or just something I didn't know. Almost all of his life was something I never saw, and he never felt he needed to tell me about every minute of it. Or even very many minutes from it.

On the bed he lay there and I could feel even then that he wished Kalyna Truss were there at that moment. He wanted to tell her how it all would end, how it all ended. I could understand it then, watching his eyes searching for how to describe his minutes with her. She was a rich, soft fabric with a bright but beautiful pattern printed on it, something you could hold and hold, and you would drink its beauty with your eyes, with your fingertips; you would stroke your cheeks with it; you would take its odors deep into your nostrils.

And my mother? She was a towel you used—and used well, used every day, and was part of your life in a way that was essential but not noticed. Take away the towel and a comfort disappeared, a necessity to that point.

Which of these describe the love of your life? Which is the bauble and which essential? Which do you need to be able to tell your child you've lived well? I know the answer to that last question for my father. Kalyna Truss. Kalyna Truss was like one of the Gospel parables where you're not certain what it means—or a story where the good guys are not so easily teased apart from the bad guys. She was not a pure element in my father's life. She was like a spark that starts the fire that saves the man from freezing to death, or like the spark that sets your barn on fire and you lose everything. You need a spark.



A gentle knock on the door. Peter Kence and my father were still talking. The door opened a crack, Your pants are on, gentlemen?

Kalyna Truss.

Just wanted to ask, Pawlie, breakfast tomorrow at 9am? Yes? Good. Dress warmly. Peter Kence, you're on your own again tomorrow. That fine? Good. Good night, and hands to yourselves.

Kalyna Truss.



## On A Deep Edge

The next morning they ate at a German café for breakfast—they were brought cold meats, sausages, and cheeses served alongside a variety of breads and sweet toppings like jam, marmalade, and honey, and coffee—and then they walked to the train station where Kalyna Truss had hired a pair of horses and carriage.

We have a 20 mile ride, she said.

The carriage had an enclosed passenger compartment, and in it was a large basket and some blankets. They went slowly until they were outside the city, and then the horses began a brisk but not hurried trot—they were bred and trained for long distance trotting. They passed by many small farms, and the road was lined with trees and stone fences. They passed through several small towns, and the villagers stopped to watch the carriage pass by. My father asked where they were going, but Kalyna Truss would not say. The direction was to the northeast. The day was pleasant and warmer than the day before. Kalyna Truss was bundled in her fur coat, but she had a longer coat in the carriage. She sat properly and looked out the window. My father reached for one of her hands, and she let him take it. She even took off her glove on that hand.

They didn't speak much, he told me. Any conversation was about what they were seeing outside the carriage. The dairy farms, the fields covered with snow and laced with the cut stalks of the last crops. The cows out in the fields trying to get grass from under the thin layer of snow. Though it wasn't cold, the cows breaths were visible as large white clouds, as if the cows were speaking and a cartoonist were about to write in their surprising comments. Or a farmer would be hauling out a bale of hay on a large hand cart to break up for a small group of cows. They could see the udders pink, they thought, from the cold. Good solid cows, my father thought. Good northern cows producing good milk all year. Or a farmer's wife would be on a stoop spreading grain feed to the chickens or breaking up pieces of stale bread for them, and the chickens would run in their backward-leg manner to beat their sisters to it, only to have the farmer's wife throw the next batch where they had run from. These were scenes my father knew well and didn't need reminding of. His father was expecting him to be doing this work right now, but in Teremcy. Here, though, the farms were crisp, there wasn't the rundown look of Ukrainian barns and outbuildings. Even the cows looked more professional.

After about 30 minutes, she laced her fingers in his.

They passed more small towns and about 2 hours later they pulled into a long, curving drive. The carriage started up a small hill and at the top it stopped in front of a cream-colored building with a mitre-shaped roof on its tall square turrets.

This is Tremsbüttel, the Wedding Castle, Kalyna announced.

They got out of the carriage, and a man dressed bit like a butler opened the door to the castle and invited them in, saying Welcome Fraulein Truss.

My father, hearing the word Castle was surprised, because his image of a castle was a stone building up on an unclimbable hilltop.

No, silly, it can just be a rich family's large country home.

They were offered some tea, and after that they went out into the gardens in the back. The gardens were beautiful even in the snow, and the paths had been cleared and were dry. They walked down to a table near a small lake with a small island in its middle. It was frozen over and the ice was swept clear of snow so that the ice was dark, nearly black. Two men followed them with the basket and blankets and pillows. One man laid out a cloth on the table and set the picnic lunch out while the other put down a waterproof and the pillows. The table and pillows were set so that they were sitting right next to each other and facing the lake.

The meal was simple—mostly sandwiches and cheeses, with some apples and pears apparently freshly grown somewhere. Even an orange for each of them. Fresh tea was brought out and a green bottle of water that had an odd taste and gaseous tenor to it—mineral water with natural carbonation. The end of the meal was a German chocolate pie, served with hot coffee. My father said he never tasted anything as fine as that pie. The men were almost hidden behind them and attended to every need—asked for or anticipated. Kalyna Truss knew how to

eat this way—nothing seemed to be new to her, but my father was struggling to understand all the small details that unfolded around him. Whenever he thought it was his place to pour more water or tea, or help serve a slice of cheese to Kalyna to be polite, a hand would appear from behind, do the task, and then disappear. My father wanted to ask Kalyna about all the things going on, where they were, why they were there, but she just shushed him and asked him to let his artistic mind just absorb it.

When the meal seemed over, my father turned to Kalyna Truss and was ready to press her on what they were doing here, but she just thrust out her arm and pointed at the lake.

A man and a woman were moving rapidly from the edge of the lake toward its center. They were on skates. My father could hear them, like the sound a sled would make on hard snow, but higher pitched. He couldn't describe really the sound, but he said it sounded like something being sliced. The couple danced together on the ice, but there was no music. They kept a close rhythm and weren't imprecise in time at any point. They held hands, held one outstretched hand to another, skated backwards, held each other tightly, gazed into each other's eyes, and the man held her while she spun low to the ice one foot stretched out, faster and faster. All to a music no one could hear but everyone could feel. They didn't dance long. They came together in a tight twirl, their hands on the sides their partner's neck, and they spun away backwards holding one arm out toward the other, with their other arms behind their backs. They parted right in front of my father and Kalyna Truss, and their backward paths went around opposite sides of the small island from each other. And they never were in view again.

One of the men helped Kalyna Truss stand, and the other indicated the way to my father. They returned to the carriage out in front of the schloss. Just before getting in, Kalyna Truss turned to my father and said,

When I marry, I want to marry in a castle like this. Promise me.

And then she climbed in before he could say anything.



The coachman had pulled down the blinds in the coach, and the compartment was darkened—not black, but darker than before. As the horses started off, Kalyna Truss said

I know what you tried to do.

She turned suddenly toward my father and put her arms under his and her hands on his back. He instinctively, I suppose, put his arms around her, and they were nearly hugging. But she put her nose under his chin so her face was touching his neck. Then slowly—very, very slowly—she moved her face up toward his until her mouth was right in front of his, and left it there as the carriage movements forced their lips to touch and then pull away.

Then she put her lips onto his, closed. She left them there for a long time. He could feel her breathing on his cheek. Her eyes were closed. He could feel her heat rising, but her breathing stayed even and calm. The carriage moved their lips against each others', but her tight hold didn't afford dramatic movements.

What my father thought—he never told me. He didn't explain any of his feelings about this trip to Trembsbüttel Schloss, only the puzzle he felt during the whole trip. But he was strangely detailed about how she moved toward him.

Then she opened her lips, and very slowly moved them against and across his. When he parted his own lips, she moved her lower lip between his. Her mouth was very slow, and very soft. Her breathing remained even. Her hands moved very slowly on his back. She put her tongue on the edges of his front teeth and traced to one side and then the other. She moved her tongue in deeper and met his.

She lay back, pulling him gently down until she was reclined on the wide seat and he was beside her, their faces resting on a pillow. They continued kissing this way—this lone, single kiss—all the way back to Hamburg.



Richie, it was hard for me to believe he was telling me this story. And the way he told it—very few words. His slow pace in the telling reflected the slow pace of it. At first I thought I was not understanding what he was saying. His manner of speaking was not sophisticated. Each phrase took time, as if he were in a deep pain at the same time. And I guess he was.

What I figured out going over this story in my head later, the next day, and really all the years between then and now was that Kalyna Truss had built up his desire with her day of absence—made him feel his need for her but her indifference to him. And then the ride to the castle taught him to be silent, to not need words to convey his feelings, his thoughts. The picnic was formal but intimate. The cold surroundings, the warmth of the meal itself, the suddenly sweet ending to it. Then the ice dance. It was totally unexpected. My father had never seen anything like it before. And the parting of the dancers after a tender embrace. The mystery of it; its nonsense. It opened him up for whatever might be revealed.

And the wedding talk. Aside from its obvious meaning, what it implied, what else could Kalyna Truss mean by it. Figure that out and you'll figure out the rest of the story.

The ride back—one long kiss. You can imagine—oh, you probably know by now from your own experiences—that a deep kiss like that can happen suddenly, and the mouths can be tight from intense desire and the force of that desire. And then it's over. No, Kalyna Truss didn't do that. She took that same sudden, intimate first kiss, and simply did it as slowly as a kiss can be done. This made her mouth soft. It made her tongue sensual. It was the height of erotic. And just as you cannot accept that I am telling you this story, so I could not accept him telling it to me. It happened to him. Not to me. Only the story did. Does a story feel like the reality that the story reports? Did you feel the kiss as I told the story to you? I felt it as he told it to me. As he must have felt it. I've tried to find stories—novels, movies, anything—that tell this same story. I read as much as I could to see if I could find where he got that story. In the end, it had to be that Kalyna Truss was its author. A 17 year old girl. Worldly for sure, and sneaky and calculating. But that much? That much?

My father had to walk away after that story, but he couldn't. He closed his eyes, and he stayed like that until I could hear his breathing deepen. I got up. I told the nurse I'd be back in a few minutes, that I needed to be outside. I went downstairs and out to the hospital lawn.

He slept. I cried.

## The Right Moment

When they got back to the train station, Kalyna Truss got out of the carriage, and when my father started to get out, she held up her hand. He sat there while she walked away and down a street accompanied by a man who met the carriage. As he watched her, another man stepped in front of the door and blocked his way until she was gone.

When he was released he went back to the rooming house and up to the garret. Peter Kence wasn't there, so he lay down and after 30 minutes of agitation, he fell asleep. His dreams were the obsessive kind, the kind you get when you're too hot. He was in an alley, and all the crowd of Germans were shouting at him in guttural language he recognized as snippets of German. And he would hear her name now and then—Kalyna Truss. The people pushed him through the crowd and down the alley. Sometimes he would fall, and people would look down and laugh at him. They would open their mouths and circle their lips with their tongues. Sometimes a pair would skate past him.

When he got to the end of the alley, he saw a stage about 50 feet down the main street lit by stage lights, and on it there was a bed and an older man had Kalyna Truss in his arms and was kissing her. Her dress had been lifted to above her knees, and the man was wearing a black suit, a dark vest, and black pants. He wore white spats over his black shoes. The bottoms of his shoes were shiny new leather, a light brown. The man stopped kissing Kalyna Truss, turned toward my father, and would smile with his big, toothless mouth. My father tried to get to the stage, but people got in his way, stopped him to ask questions, take him into stores, take him into apartments, open a drain cover and take him into the sewage system. He would try to yell to her, but his mouth was paralyzed.

Then my father would half wake, and when he fell back asleep a minute or two later, the dream would repeat. In the minutes when he was awake, his dream would continue or parts of it would begin again. No matter how he tried to think of something else, to redirect the dream, to change its course, it would re-take its course in his mind. I would not change. And while he was awake between the periods of sleep, he could feel the dream unwinding while he was awake and looking around the room, out the window, toward Peter Kence's side of the room. Even when he got up for the toilet it would keep playing somewhere in his mind, and he could see the dream unfolding. It felt like an itch so deep no fingers could reach it. He sometimes started to cry. He thought about going out into the cold air in the streets. He thought about drawing a cold bath. He was hot. He was sweating.

Then, one time he fell asleep, the dream was different, and he didn't remember it. He woke still in a sweat. Peter Kence was alarmed.



I lay on the lawn a long time. Maybe an hour. I'd known mostly high school girls, and none of them were like Kalyna Truss. Women I've known since weren't like her. I never read a story with a woman like her. My father was from a small farm in a rural part of nowhere at all. I needed to forget that part of the story before I could go back up to him. Not forget it forever, but get it out of my mind. Make some room for something else.

I hadn't thought of women as such dominant actors in life. They seemed made for the background. Chief Donahue was looking into something. Why had he lay there so long? Why didn't Sam come help? If they had, maybe my father would be getting ready to go home now.

Dew was forming. I went back up. My father was waiting and ready to continue the story. Maybe he could see I had been crying.

Don't cry. Why cry? Kalyna Truss made me happier than anyone. I can never forget that day. The drama. So Russian. She made life a stage. She was the greatest actress, and whatever around her was her stage, her props, her colleagues in acting. She exited the stage and the audience was not permitted to see her until the next act. She never played to her emotions, but to the audience. Was I the audience, or her co-star? I'll never know. Believe me, honey, I'll never know. What will be my last thought? Perhaps Kalyna Truss, walking offstage, down a

dark and dirty alley in Hamburg in 1910, with a young man stranded on stage behind her. My father lamented.

Peter Kence asked him what kinds of dreams he was having. Peter Kence said he heard my father simpering, and his arms and legs would jerk and the bed would make a loud squeak. He said he heard my father squirming all night, throwing off the covers, pulling them on, walking slowly to the toilet, whispering, tapping on the window. He was afraid my father would get into Peter Kence's own bed.

The rest of the day Peter Kence and my father stayed in the garret. Tomorrow they would get on the Pennsylvania and head for America. Until then, the idea of the boat was like the idea of a train, or a large carriage, but they had seen pictures of large ocean-going boats in the windows of travel agencies in Hamburg, the fears started. Foremost was how the boat could float. It was made of iron, and iron didn't float. But they tried to figure it out. They thought about how shovels acting when tossed into a pond—they sank. Axes, crowbars, mowing machines all the same. Were those things made of wood, they would float. Then Peter Kence hit on an idea. An empty bucket would float until it tipped over. So if you added some water to it or sand, it would float. Neither sand nor iron would float—they divided over whether water floated.

Then they hit on it—a bathtub. An iron bathtub would float if it didn't tip over, like the bucket. And it's obvious that the iron heavy nature of a bathtub should prevent it from floating. But it would. Wouldn't it? For a while they weren't sure, but the bucket came back into their minds and they were sure a bathtub would float. To them this mean it was possible for a boat the size of the Pennsylvania could float, and it would float.

Peter Kence had the perfect idea. Pawlie, he said, let's go to where the boat is tomorrow. If it's floating—we can ask them—if it's floating, we'll got on. If it's not—if it's underwater, or no one can swear it's not on a platform or stilts under the water, we won't. We'll find another country to settle in. We will get our money back. We can wait to see whether an iron boat can float.

My father wasn't impressed by the idea, but he agreed that's what they would do.



They packed and repacked. They checked and counted their money—German and Russian. They stared out the window at the snow falling steadily and heavily. They both felt agitated. They went out to the closest place to eat. They brought back food and drinks. They bought some chocolate powder and milk so that perhaps Frau Laubsch would warm the milk and make them a sweet drink before they went to sleep.

The snow disturbed them. Peter Kence was certain they would not be able to get on the boat. He said he had gone to the docks while my father was on his carriage trip to Tremsbüttel, and there were no large boats anywhere. He said he tried to ask, but no one could understand what he was saying. The snow was already a foot deep here in the middle of a city. The boat had to be somewhere else, down the Elbe he supposed, and that meant a trip. A trip that heavy snow would hamper or prevent. The boat would leave without them. They didn't know where the boat was, so they couldn't try to get there a day early. And they were supposed to meet their traveling group near the docks at dawn, so going early to the boat wouldn't even be permitted.

Peter Kence would walk to the window, sit by it and wait for the snow to slow down, but it always grew heavier while he watched. Then he'd walk back to his bed and try to sleep, telling my father that he's sure he couldn't sleep on the boat, and that meant he wouldn't sleep for 17 days or 18. He couldn't sleep.

They went one at a time to the bath room and bathed. They washed their clothes and hung them up on a line in the garret. They stoked the fire to heat the room so their clothes could dry. The day passed slowly and they felt every minute of it pass.

In the evening, after they had their snacks for supper, they went down to the small dining area and found Frau Laubsch there. They asked if she could heat some milk with the powder, and she took the bottle back into her kitchen, asking them to come with her. Her kitchen was tidy but large. Large in that everything in it was larger than they had ever seen: large stove and oven, large sink, a cutting table very high, thick, and wide, large knives, large pots and pans, large spoons and forks. They felt small and like children. Frau Lausch began by asking some questions in a halting but understandable Russian.

Herr Sanuk, I see you've fallen under the witchcraft of Fraulein Truss. She has been here a few more days than



you have, as I recall, and so I've been able to watch her. To interrogate her. There is something odd about her family and upbringing, I believe, as if she were older than she seems, or perhaps nature has frozen her physical development. Do you find that you are able to keep your wits about you in her presence?

Yes, Frau Laubsch, I believe I have. She seems quite a mature young woman to me.

Perhaps. Her difficulty is not in her own maturity but in her point of view. How she looks on people. How she categorizes them, I could say. Let me ask. With her, do you feel as a man? I mean, do you feel fully a person. I'm not saying this right.

I believe I feel like a person, like a man. I have the usual feelings. Do you mean something else?

Yes, something else. You know. A dog or a cow. People are not like dogs or cows. And a person would treat a dog different from a person. A dog cannot understand properly. Only a few words or phrases. And one would kill a cow to eat it. Not a person. Kalyna. She has trouble distinguishing another person from an animal.

What? How can you mean that? Perhaps your Russian is not good. She cannot tell I am not a horse?

No. No, no. She can see that you are not a horse, but she cannot see that inside you are a person the same way she is. She knows she thinks and feels a certain way, but she cannot see that other people do. She doesn't believe a dog can think, or feel beyond simple pain and pleasure. And she doesn't believe you do either. Or Peter Kence, or me, or anyone. She need not treat you fully as a person, because you are not. I am not. Peter Kence is not.

Richie, Frau Laubsch didn't have all the words she needed to explain this to my father, and so her descriptions seemed like nonsense to him. He ignored her then, and forgot about the conversation for a long time. Finally he told me what Frau Laubsch meant.

Kalyna didn't think of my father—and others—as fully human. They were animals. She was not surprised my father couldn't speak French because animals can't speak. She wasn't puzzled that he didn't know about certain types of food, because animals ate only what their instincts told them to. People, like my father, could speak to her only because it was a special trick they had learned, but they didn't fully appreciate her meanings. A dog doesn't know what Sit means, but when the dog hears the sounds, the dog sits. It is an accident of conditioning. When Kalyna Truss asks my father to promise that she will marry in a castle, she is talking to herself, because an animal cannot understand words as complex as that, and so why not say them. There is no harm. When the animal walks away, it forgets even the sounds of the words.

Yes, I see Frau Laubsch. She doesn't see us as educated as she is. As sophisticated. She knows we have a limited way of understanding her. In this way we seem more like dogs to her.

Ok, at least you are not fooling yourselves.

Because of their language incompatibilities, my father and Frau Laubsch believed they understood each other, but they were very far away from that. Kalyna Truss was toying with my father the way a spoiled child would play with her pet cat. And if were harmed, she could just turn away. Her father would get her another. She could go on playing somewhere else.

Tomorrow, Frau Laubsch. Do you have a way to wake early? We must be at the meeting place by 8am.

Of course. I have been assisting men like you for years. Going onto boats. I have a machine. A clock. It doesn't only tell time. You can instruct it to awaken you at a precise time. It is utterly reliable so long as you meet its mechanical needs. You must wind it. Wind a spring. You treat it like a machine. It acts like a machine. It is predictable. There is nothing human and mistakable about it. When you turn your back on it, it maintains its steady counting. A machine. A clock with special talents. 6am?

Yes, Frau Laubsch. This gives us plenty of time.

The milk was ready and the powder thoroughly mixed in. She found some sweet scones and jam for them. Peter Kence had listened to their conversation, and I believe he understood Frau Laubsch better than my father did. My father had been bitten and caught the Kalyna Truss disease. Peter Kence was immune for being invisible. They ate like children. Even making smacking noises and slurping their milk. Frau Laubsch was their mother, taking care of every need. Until tomorrow when they departed, and they would deliver themselves to the Pennsylvania and her female demands. To the North Sea and then the Atlantic. To the cold water and

winter storms. To the winds, rains, and snows. To the gales. To the waves. To the panic of iron in the face of the depth of the ocean. To the predatory life someone assumes when going to a land to take that land. To take and not give. The American way.

And to Kalyna Truss, who would not hesitate to wring their chicken necks to feather her pillow. Whose schemes were as unfathomable as the ocean's deep. Kalyna Truss, who was waiting on the stairs. Waiting for the right moment.

## It is Floating

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of January we left Hamburg on a small boat and come in to big boat named Pennsylvania and take us 17 days to get here.

Frau Laubsch was good to her word and she woke them up at 6am. She had prepared a small breakfast of bread and jam and coffee, and then they bid her farewell and walked down to the meeting building. When they walked in there were about 20 people waiting in the large, open room, sitting on chairs scattered about and bags and parcels in front of individuals and groups, families, women by themselves. My father said he couldn't see everyone in the room because some people had bunched up. And he wasn't sure what the right thing to do was, so he took out his handkerchief and wiped his nose. No one seemed to notice.

There was a large container of coffee and cups, so my father and Peter Kence took a cup each. Many of the people spoke Russian or Ukrainian, but not all. Most were young, and there were mostly men by themselves, then couples without children, then families, then women alone, including girls.

Soon two men came in and they took turns telling people what was going to happen that morning. The Pennsylvania was on the Elbe, but not nearby. They would get on a small boat here first, and that would take them to the Pennsylvania, which was anchored off a town called Cuxhaven, which was on the North Sea where the Elbe met the ocean. They were told to take out their tickets for the two men to examine to make sure all was in order. It would take all day to get to the Pennsylvania, and once on board and settled, they would be served supper, and during the night, the boat would set out for New York.

The men pointed out a fact that my father had not anticipated.

There are three levels of accommodation on the Pennsylvania. First class, second class, and steerage. No one in this room is in first class. Second class is a little less luxurious, and steerage is the least expensive, but is still quite good on the Pennsylvania. When we get to the ship, you must enter the gangway that leads to the class you are traveling. Just like many of the trains you are used to.

My father and Peter Kence took out their tickets when one of the men came over; their tickets were examined and found to be proper. The men went over to a small table and found sets of documents for my father and Peter Kence—they were Russian passports and visas for America. My father and Peter Kence didn't know that failure to obtain these documents would have ended their trip right then and there.

The men moved quickly through the room and soon they were on the dock boarding a small boat that looked like a tugboat or small fishing vessel. There was enough room inside the front cabin for everyone to sit, and there was space below for their bags and bundles. My father and Peter Kence decided to sit out at the rear of the boat to watch Europe pass by. They felt they would never see this place again, never see their homes, and they wanted to see as much as they could. It was snowing—not as heavily as the day before, but heavy enough that once they got going, there wasn't much to see on shore, everything being blanked out by the white snow falling and white mist. But they saw buildings grow small and farther apart, then there were farms and farmland extending right down to the river. They passed boats anchored and also moving toward the sea, and boats passed by them headed into Hamburg.

While they were getting onto the small boat, my father easily saw that Kalyna Truss was not among the passengers. Gone.

The trip was slow. My father moved in and out of the cabin. They had meats, bread, cheese, and beer for the passengers to eat. There was a toilet as well. Some people found spots to lie down, and there were enough children and infants that the cabin was loud and unpleasant. My father stayed outside as much as he could, but the cold and bitterness forced him inside often and for long periods.

Peter Kence also noticed Kalyna Truss was not with them. He knew that Kalyna was special to my father, and though he was not certain what they were to each other, he knew it was more than a casual acquaintance. In later years, long after my father had died, I talked to Peter Kence about Kalyna and my father. He said that the day



my father spent with Kalyna while he had been trying to sleep had changed my father in small ways. He was less talkative about his private life, he didn't seem to look at women with as predatory way as before, and he never assumed from their appearances and what they said what or how people, especially women, would be or what they would or could do. Peter Kence said my father started to say that love was the urge to slow down when you feel pushed to speed up. And he said that the test of an artist was to practice his art as slowly as possible. And he said that my father began to reach his hand toward women when he talked to them. He was less afraid of physical contact but never moved too far in that direction unless there was a response.

Peter Kence said my father was not better at reading people by their eyes and how they moved their faces and hands, but he seemed more interested in learning how to read people. My father started to ask Peter Kence what he thought people were thinking, and this made Peter Kence more aware and alert to other people as well.



An hour after the sun must have set, they passed into the entrance of a harbor and docked at a pier. With the snow it was hard to tell when the sun set—it was just a steady darkening of the clouds. On the pier they looked at the next pier to them and they saw the Pennsylvania. My father and Peter Kence could only stand there and look up at it. Most everyone else seemed too busy with their bags or children to do more than glance.

The ship was lit by many electric lights, and the lights lit the water in the harbor between the piers. The lights had a yellow tinge to them, and on the water their reflections looked a little orange [check this].

My father saw the captain of the small boat they were on come down from his pilot's station and stand on the main deck. My father went up to the boat and asked the captain if he spoke some Russian. When he said he did, my father then asked him

Captain, my traveling companion and I need to know before we get on the Pennsylvania—does it float in ocean water? Is it floating right now, or is it sitting on a platform beneath the water?

The captain, who had been looking at the Pennsylvania, looked quickly at my father, maybe trying to figure out whether the person asking the question was joking, was a simpleton, was drunk. Seeing my father, he must have seen—as anyone would for years to come—a serious man with a simple but important question. A man not afraid to seem uneducated when seeking information. So he answered directly and quietly

Sir, that ship is floating right now, and it will float very well on the open sea. It is made of very heavy materials, but it has within it a large space filled with air that causes it to float. When you are aboard the ship and out to sea, it will seem light and limber to you, sir. It is made of steel, which flexes quite well—it is not iron, which would be too brittle. It is reasonable to fear such a contraption, but you can be assured it will not sink unless a disaster strikes.

The captain looked straight at my father the whole time he was explaining the ship, and when he was done he looked back up at the Pennsylvania. He remained silent after that. My father simply nodded. He went to Peter Kence and said, I trust the captain of the small boat we were just on, and he assures me the Pennsylvania is floating at this very moment.

Peter Kence nodded, looking at the ship.

To board the ship, they needed to get to the next pier over, which meant walking a big U. They could see that the ship already had passengers because many were standing on the deck at the railing looking over at them. The ship seemed immense to my father. It was about 550 feet long and 65 feet wide, had one large smokestack and 4 masts. There was a 3-story structure on the ship that extended about 1/3 of its length.

When they got to the other pier, they looked for the steerage gangway. There was a line. They waited about 20 minutes to get to the head of the line, and the man there checking tickets shook his head no. The man didn't speak Russian, so they didn't know what the problem was. But he pointed to the gangway that was closer to the front of the ship. This was the second class line.

When they got to the front of the line, they handed over their tickets, and then the man asked something. My father and Peter Kence didn't know what he wanted, so they handed over their passports and visas. The man nodded his head, checked the documents, handed them back, and then turned and indicated they should go up

the gangway. At the top another man looked at their tickets, and gave them each a key and a slip of paper with a number on it—their berth. They were on the top deck of second class, close to the front of the ship.

They went down the long off-white passageways until they found their berth. There were two beds in the room, a sink, a small table, two chairs, and an armoire. A small round window looked out over the deck and then over the pier. On the table was an odd looking machine with a black wire that went into the wall. They put their bundles into the armoire, and decided to explore the ship a little. They found the toilets and baths they were supposed to use, a dining room, a music room, and a smoking room. They found the way to the deck, and went out, but only for a few minutes because they had left their heavy coats in their stateroom. But they went to the rail and looked over pier to the lines of people still boarding, and then across the water to the small boat they had come on. My father wasn't certain, but he thought he could see the captain of that boat still standing on its deck, looking at the Pennsylvania.

They went back to their stateroom and lay down.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, this is much better than I had thought, Peter Kence said. I had heard the accommodations were terrible, but I also didn't expect to be in second class. Did we pay that much?

I don't know. It seems like we paid a lot.

They turned off the electric lights—all but one—and dozed off.



Peter Kence still believed he wouldn't be able to sleep once on the ocean, so this nap was to him one of the last times he'd be able to rest until they got to America. But, he noticed that he was constantly being surprised by what's been happening on their trip. Fred gone—would he appear on the ship at some point?—Pawlie perhaps killing a man, Kalyna Truss turning Pawlie upside down, the second-class berth. These are the thoughts he had after he heard the steward going through the passageways calling out that dinner was served, and woke up. My father got up too, and they made their way to the dining room.

There were tables and chairs, linen—not fine but acceptable—flatware, and place settings. They were served a stew, boiled vegetables, boiled potatoes, sausages, bread, butter, jam, beer, and coffee. The conversations they heard were mostly in Russian or Ukrainian. They looked around for Fred, but he wasn't in the dining room.

The room was loud from conversation and the clank of fork and knife on plates. The room smelled of food and people. No one seemed rich among them—almost everyone wore rough clothes, better for travel and staying in one piece on an uncertain journey.

After, they were invited to the music room where a fiddle, a violin, and an accordion made German music. Some people danced, but most seemed to have concluded it was better to wait and see how the trip would commence. People came up to my father, perhaps because of his size, his height. They wanted to know where he was from, where he was trying to go. He was not comfortable with strangers, and typically Peter Kence took over the conversation.

An hour of music was enough. Some retired to the smoking room, but my father and Peter Kence retired to their berth. For the first time on the trip, they took some time to read. Because for the first time they had good light, some time to themselves, and no need to plan anything for 17 days. Peter Kence studied a map of New York and Boston, and looked over a description of how to get from New York to Peabody. It would require being able to figure out some things, and that raised a question in Peter Kence's mind.

How are we going to learn enough English? Kalyna Truss was going to teach us, but we haven't seen her since you...since day or two ago.

There are others who speak English. There seems to be some Americans in second class, and perhaps we can learn from them.

It would be better to learn from someone who can speak a language we understand. We are not children and can't take the time to just listen to the language. We need to know only some things about food, travel, houses, sleeping, and things like that. Things that help us get from New York to Peabody, find food, find a place to sleep if we don't make it to my brother's quickly enough, find work.

We will find someone or some way. We haven't needed to know German or any other language so far.

They grew quiet and again and kept reading. Soon they were exhausted. The room had its own electric heater and the room was quite warm, which made the fatigue built up from the last days too hard to resist. The urge and need to sleep, though, interfered with their determination to take off their shirts and pants, put away their books, turn off the lights, and climb into their beds. But after another 10 minutes, they did.

The ship made no motions. It was like sleeping in a steel room on a rock. The walls were not made of wood but some metal painted a cream color. There were some red stripes that seemed to serve no purpose. The ship didn't appear to them to be new, but the things in their room were unfamiliar, as if from a future world.

Looking out the window from their beds, they could see flurries drifting past the lights sitting atop poles.

And then they were asleep.



Some time later, while they slept and beneath their awareness, men outside began to shout. The gangways were stowed, the doors closed. The boilers were stoked with coal by teams of men without shirts and covered with black coal dust. The steam built up and rope bigger than they could imagine ropes could be made were untied—big knots untied—and steam coursed into the engines, and screws turned. Tugboats pulled and pushed on the Pennsylvania. The ship no longer sat by the pier. It then no longer sat in the mouth of the Elbe. It was on the North Sea. If the men had been awake, they would have heard and felt all these changes. They were no longer in Europe. They would not return to the Ukraine, to Podilsky, to Teremcy without an effort they could not imagine.

They slept like children, nothing to be afraid of. Their faces were relaxed, and they breathed heavily. If they had dreams, no one can say what they were.



The day before, when my father and Peter Kence were napping in the garret, a carriage came to the rooming house. It had an enclosed coach and a bed for carrying trunks and suitcases. It was loaded, and Kalyna Truss got into the coach. They rode through the streets of Hamburg in the heavy snow. They stopped at a consulate and a man brought out an envelop with documents. Her tickets were printed on thick paper and had bright red trim on them. She looked out the coach window and saw people walking to and from their homes and businesses. She saw dogs and chickens too, dogs on the street and chickens in cages ready for sale. Her hands were cold in the coach, and she put them between her legs.

After about 10 minutes the carriage was close to the Elbe. The driver stopped and the bed was unloaded. Then loaded onto a boat. A man can to the carriage with a shovel and cleared a path for her to the dock, and then he took a broom and swept off the gangway. Kalyna Truss strode into the small cabin and a man brought her a hot tea.

If she had dreams, no one could say what they were.

## Crux of Summer

Peter Kence woke up. The sky had light in it. He tried to figure out whether they were at sea or still in the harbor. He had slept very soundly—had not woken up at all during the night. My father was still sleeping, nightly snoring. The cabin was warm. Peter Kence felt no motion except the floors and walls were vibrating. He concluded that something was happening, but he wasn't feeling the deep rocking and flowing motions he had expected from his experiences with smaller boats, like the one that took them to Cuxhaven.

He waited for my father to wake up. Peter Kence lay there and thought about the days coming up. He was afraid of the ocean, he had to finally admit to himself. Afraid the ship would sink and he would drown, a manner of death he had feared all his life. Even though it was warm in the cabin, he pulled the blanket up to his face and turned onto his side facing the wall. He brought his knees up toward his face. He closed his mind to the fear.

My father woke up and thought Peter Kence was still asleep, though he didn't hear any heavy breathing or snoring. He looked at the window and saw it was light. He felt the ship vibrating and thought he felt a long, slow rocking motion. They were at sea he was certain. He threw off the blanket and put his feet onto the deck. Peter Kence heard him and without turning asked

Do you think we're at sea?

Yes, of course we are.

Why do you think so?

My father wasn't interested in trying to debate the point, so he got up and walked to the window—a port-hole—and looked out. He saw the sun reflecting off the dark, unbroken water. It was a calm day for the North Sea. He said

I think so because when I look outside, I can see that we are surrounded by water. No land is in sight. The sea is calm, but I can see we are moving. I can feel the engines shaking the ship. Is there some other proof of our situation that would suit you better today?

Peter Kence was heartbroken. He pulled the blanket off himself and went to the window. He saw the ocean. He felt alone.

Just then the steward came through the passageway and announced breakfast. It must be early still. They dressed and went to the dining room, where they ate a light meal of fancy breads, butter, jam, sliced meat, and tea. Fred was not there. Maybe Fred's in steerage they considered. They waved for one of the stewards to come over. My father asked

We were traveling with a companion, Fred Burrowick, and we were separated before getting onto this ship. We have not seen him in this dining room. He is perhaps in steerage. Can we find out whether he is on the ship.

The man answered that passengers cannot move between the different classes, but he would make an inquiry and get back to him later. He asked for my father's name and cabin number, and said he would put a note in the cabin.

Maybe Fred made it, Peter Kence said.

But my father was sure he hadn't. There wasn't anything different about the arrangements the three of them had made, and unless Fred bought another ticket for the ship—in steerage—he would be here in second class with them. Fred was gone.

My father went up onto the deck and looked out over the ocean. Peter Kence would not go out there; in fact, he wouldn't look out the windows. He avoided talking about the ocean and the ship. He went back to the cabin and pulled out a book. A thick one. He read slowly.

On deck my father looked out. The sea was flat still with hardly any irregularity to the surface. Sometimes he saw a white patch. The sea was a green blue and the sky was overcast with slightly broken clouds that looked like snow clouds breaking up. There was little wind aside from the movement of the ship. A man came out and grabbed the railing near my father. They both spoke Russian.

This is unusual, the man said. I am used to high winds and big waves. This is a large ship and we wouldn't be in

any danger, but the ride would be rougher, and people not used to the sea would be ill. But we are just beginning. A winter crossing can be disturbing to those not accustomed to it. My wife and I are returning from holidays with my family. We are not wealthy, but we have enough to make a trip every year for a few weeks. And you?

I am headed for America for a new life. I am from the Ukraine. The western part.

And where in America? Or have you not decided that yet? An exploration first, perhaps.

Peabody, Massachusetts.

Ah, east coast. Boston is a nice city. Very European, in my view.

My father thought about that for a minute. East coast. He hadn't really thought about the lay of the land. He was not good at picturing where things were, and maps confused him as much as taught him.

Yes, I suppose that's true, he said finally. This would end that topic, he hoped.

They stood in silence for quite a while. My father became hypnotized by the sea passing slowly by. The ship seemed to be alive with the sound and vibration of the engines. The black smoke trailing behind seemed like the breath of a great animal. Although the air moving past them, the sea, and the ship made lots of noise, it was a kind of noise that disappeared and it felt like a great silence to him. Peaceful. No one yelling, no chores to do. He started to feel that he had duties somewhere, and his belly filled with knots, but he couldn't think of what he had to do.

He saw some chairs on the deck, and he found one to sit in. A steward came out and gave him a wool blanket for his legs. He wished he had his book with him, but he sat there for about an hour. The cold air on his face made the blanket seem particularly warm. The ocean was as a great wheat field in its expanse and mystery.



Suddenly. A loud noise, like a bell being shattered. Where was it coming from. My father and Peter Kence were in their beds, dozing lightly. It was light, but they didn't know the part of the day. My father found the sound. It came from the machine with the black wire, and the sound was from coming from the wooden box that formed its base. On it was a fork-like metal frame with a contraption on top, with a wire that led from one end into the box. The contraption had a black middle part that looked like something you should hold. The other had a disk perpendicular to the middle, and the other end had a smaller disk with what looked like a cow's horn curving toward the middle, handle part. The whole thing was vibrating to the sound coming out of it. It didn't seem inclined to stop.

My father told me later he didn't know where the idea came from, but perhaps the shape of the middle of the contraption resting on top of the machine invited him to pick it up. The noise stopped. Peter Kence and my father were shocked into silence, which was broken by a scratchy sound coming from one of the disks. It was faint, so my father put the disk closer to his ear and he could hear what sounded like a woman's voice. It was saying, Can you hear me?

My father answered, Yes.

Peter Kence said, What?

I'm not talking to you, I'm talking to...to her. And he held the contraption up in the air. The woman said

Listen carefully, take the thing you're holding, and put the end where my voice is coming from and put it right on your ear. Did you do that? Just say Yes if you did, I will be able to hear you.

Yes.

Now, put the end with the horn right in front of your mouth. You should be able to hold the handset in one hand comfortably with these two parts in the right place. Say Yes if you did that.

Yes.

Good. Your voice is loud and clear now. Can you hear me fine?

Yes, I can. What is going on?

What's going on, Peter Kence said.

I don't know. It seems like I'm talking to someone.

And you are, Powell Sanuk. It's Kalyna Truss. And you are using a machine called a telephone.



It's Kalyna Truss, my father shouted.

How can that be?, Peter Kence said.

I don't know. Her voice is in this machine. And when I speak, she can hear.

Yes, it's I, Pawlie. I am on the Pennsylvania. I am in the first class part. I've made some arrangements. Never mind that. Can you meet me on the deck later today?

My father said he felt like a child. He didn't know what was happening, but he was sure the machine was conveying the voice of Kalyna Truss to him. The mechanism for doing that was a mystery, but because what he heard made sense as part of a conversation with a real person and not some enigma, he went with that instead of trying to figure out all the explanations for what could be happening.

Yes, I can.

Then in 1 hour, meet me on the righthand side of the ship. Righthand as you face the direction the ship is traveling. I will be exactly in the middle of the ship, at the railing or sitting in a chair near the railing at 3pm. You can ask a steward to tell you the time. You should also ask the steward to explain the telephone to you.

Yes, I can do that.

When I say Goodbye, you should do the same, and then put the thing you are holding back on its perch. Can you do that?

Yes.

Goodbye.

He paused.

Goodbye.

Then he heard a clicking sound in his ear from the contraption. When he put the handset back onto its cradle, he noticed the cradle sank down a bit. He lifted and put down the contraption a few times to try to understand something about the machine, but all he saw was the cradle go up and down. And he noticed a crank on the side. He was afraid to touch it—not because he thought he would be harmed, but because he didn't know what the machine would do if cranked.

I will meet Kalyna Truss on the deck in 1 hour.

That machine told you that?

No, I think she did. I think that machine was conveying her voice to me from somewhere. She said she is on this ship. In first class.

No doubt, Peter Kence said.



Out on deck he saw Kalyna Truss wrapped in a quilt on a lounging chair, and she was wearing her fur hat. He saw her before she saw him. He could see her young face looking out to sea. He grew uncertain that it was wise to go to her, but he had a strong urge to.

She saw him and smiled, waved him over. He took a chair and sat down next to her. They said their hellos and Kalyna Truss didn't waste time.

I've made some arrangements. First class and second class are not supposed to mingle, but I've arranged to be able to visit you and Peter Kence in second class to teach you English. We'll start that tomorrow morning. And I've also arranged for you to be able to come visit me in first class, including coming to my cabin. You'll need to show this.

And she handed him a red token.

I boarded the ship about a day before you did. I had lots of trunks and other things—like my cameras and equipment—so I came on a small boat alone. And I needed to make the arrangements. It wasn't hard, but I had to speak to the captain and a representative of the ship line. The Truss name helped a lot.

My father listened to this and other comments as well, but his mind wandered as he remembered the kiss in the carriage, and his desire for her grew. He wanted to slip under the quilt with her, but this was the wrong place for that. Finally he spoke

Kalyna, when we were in the carriage we kissed, and...

She raised her hand, then put her gloved finger to her mouth and shushed him.

Remember, the rule that day was to not speak, and that extends to never speaking of the day. It was what I call a perfect day. I plan them, and they are best remembered without interpretation. Without thinking about them, and certainly without talking about them. It's like making love. You don't analyze it during and after. You don't talk about it. You know what it is and was, and that's enough.

Making love. He had not heard a phrase like that. He guessed its meaning and felt sure of it. Kalyna seemed too young to make love with someone, let alone have a philosophy to go with it. But it was clear to him that she had more experience than he did.

You should plan perfect days too. You have a woman friend back home, yes?

Olena.

Yes, Olena. Have you had a perfect day with her?

I...we...I don't know. It's not something I've ever thought about. We've had memorable days together. I don't know what makes a memorable day perfect.

A perfect day is one where you wouldn't change a single thing that happened. It's a day when there is no need to speak in order to move to the next thing. It's either perfectly planned, or it is set up to unfold without any thought. Perfect days are almost defined to be about people new to each other. It's a day of exploration. It can be a day of discovery. But it can never be a day of understanding. If you feel you understand what happened that day, it cannot be perfect. The perfect day is one you remember with satisfaction and a touch of sadness. Sadness because the day cannot be duplicated. You can have more perfect days with a person, but you can never have the same perfect day again. Come closer.

He moved his chair closer. They both looked out through the railing at the sea. The waves had gotten larger, and the clouds had grown a dark gray and were solid and low. In the distance he thought he could see a snow squall. The ship pushed forward with only the slightest lurch. The vibrations were a little harder, and the smoke seemed coming out the stack faster.

Kalyna's hands were under the quilt, and he could see that she had them between her legs to keep them warm. Her face was red from the cold, and her eyes were watering. She sensed him looking at her and smiled but didn't look at him.

He heard a bell ringing.

That's the signal for our tea time. I must go and hear the gossip. I will come to your cabin at 10 tomorrow morning. You and Peter should prepare yourselves to learn some English. Be ready to tell me where you will be going when you arrive in New York, and I will try to teach you what you will need to know to get there. We will need to practice, and you will need to practice with Peter the whole trip.

She stood and walked toward the front of the ship. She was wearing her fur coat and heavy wool pants. They looked like men's pants. She opened a doorway, waved goodbye, and disappeared.

He moved onto her lounge and covered his legs with her quilt. Her warmth was still in the quilt, and he wanted it. The quilt was large, and he pulled it to his nose—and it still covered his feet. He closed his eyes and tried to remember the perfect day, as she called it. He tried to remember his lips just brushing his. The heat of her mouth when she opened it. He lay there until it was dark and the ship's lights were on and washing the deck on a yellow light. The seas remained agitated but didn't get worse. It didn't snow but felt like it was about to. He returned to his cabin.



The steward was in there telling Peter Kence about the telephone. The steward offered to begin again but Peter Kence said that it was easy enough and he would explain it to my father. The steward finished by talking about how to call someone's cabin. It involved the crank. It seemed from what he heard that my father believed the difficult part of using the contraption was in understanding the phrases you needed to say. That is was like a stylized conversation, and you needed to say the exact phrase at the right time, or the process would break down

and maybe it wouldn't be possible to talk to the person you wished to. Once you got to the real conversation, it seemed like you could say whatever you wanted in any order, but at the start and at the end you needed to stay within a script.

Peter Kence said that the steward told him there was no Fred Burrowick. The steward added

But there was a Fred Burrowick on the manifest before we left. He never boarded the ship.

Peter Kence and my father grunted their understanding. My father started to think Fred might be dead, killed by the two companions of the man he hit with the shovel. In his mind, he was sure he had killed or very severely injured that man. It was dark, but he had swung as hard as he could.

Gentlemen, supper will be served in about 35 minutes. And he left.

I saw Kalyna Truss, my father said. She will come here tomorrow at 10 to start teaching us English. You need to tell here where we're going in America and how you plan to get us there so she can teach us what we need for that part of the trip.

And your plan for her is what?

We have no plans. She likes to dismiss the past as irrelevant. We will learn English.

He didn't tell Peter Kence that she had arranged for my father to be able to visit her in first class and even in her cabin. There were no plans, and why cause a discussion that doesn't need to take place.



That night my father lay awake and thought about Olena. Olena was stable and reliable. She had strong feelings for him, he was sure, and he for her, and there were never any puzzles or mysteries. She had her changes of mood, but not from day to night or black to white. Olena was tender and loving, and though she favored the traditions, she wanted what was good for him and his family, he was certain. He remembered the times they were in her bed at her parent's home when they were away, and those times were exciting for him and enjoyable. His first times with a woman.

Every time he tried to make himself focus on those times, Kalyna Truss would pop into his mind. Holding her hands, the long kiss. The sharpness of her thoughts. He knew Kalyna would never take Olena's place, but she was more exciting. She was like the sharpest knife plunged into his chest. She was like the brightest day in the fields. She was like the wind that whipped through the wheat in the crux of summer and careened up the hills and down into the river valley. Kalyna Truss was a rare bird and Olena a steady ox, and you take the ox when you build your family. But even your family stops to listen to the rare bird and admire its plumage.



## Noticeable Clothes

Kalyna Truss was the best thing that happened to my father, I've concluded, and the worst. She set his expectations high for what a companion, a wife could be. She was beautiful beyond his dreams; she was intelligent and well-educated. She was sensual and warm. She was also selfish to the point of not even thinking of others as people. They were props and she used them. If she needed to be warm and accommodating to get what she wanted, she could be that—for a time.

My father lying on the bed as he told the story still loved her, but he knew he had made a mistake by doing so. On the ship she made herself vulnerable to gain his trust and devotion. She didn't want much from him—it wasn't a situation that demanded a command performance to get what she needed—but she knew only one way to influence people. Well, she knew two ways—the other being money, but she was savvy enough to know that money didn't work on everyone.

Peter Kence spent as much of the trip as he could in their cabin. He pulled the curtains most of the time to avoid looking at the ocean. This was a fear he suspected, and his suspicions became real. He knew it was a fear others could make fun of, so he didn't talk about it all the time the way some would. And my father recognized his vulnerability and didn't press the issue—didn't insist on him coming up on deck. This was perhaps the first time that the two men, as men, treated each other also as real people.



The next morning, after that had breakfast and my father had strolled the deck, Kalyna Truss came to their cabin. She knocked on the door, and when she entered she found the table set up in the middle with the two beds on either side. The table was close to Peter Kence's bed, where he sat, and the two chairs were evenly spaced around the round table. It was a small table, but it had enough space for 2 place settings for a full dinner.

She was dressed dowdy; black dress, a black hat, nothing form fitting at all. She brought some books and she was all business. She asked

Are you ready to get started?

They all sat down. She took off her hat and her gloves. Then she asked

When you get to New York, where are you going and what will you do when you get there?

Peter Kence answered

We are going to Peabody, Massachusetts, where my brother lives. We will take a boat there from New York to Boston, and then a train to Salem, then another train to Peabody. When we get there we will look for work. I am a machinist, and Powell is a metal worker. He makes those decorative metal sheets you see on barns and churches.

Kalyna pulled out a small book and seemed to be thinking.

Then you'll need some basic words and phrases for food and clothing, words for trains and boats; how to get places; looking for work; machinist, metal work. This shouldn't be too hard. Let's start with names. Here is how you say My name is Peter Kence. It's My name Peter Kence. Say that.

Peter Kence probably struggled with the pronunciation some. I don't know what exact sentences she taught them, but my father never spoke perfectly grammatical English, so I wouldn't be surprised if Kalyna Truss didn't either. You always imagine that someone learning English hears a perfect sample, and that they mangle it, but what happens if the sample is already mangled?

The first morning she worked on saying their names and the basics for clothes. Name, hands, face, eyes, ears, arms, legs, feet, knees, elbows, bellies, backs, rumps, hair, and some simple colors. They both seemed to learn quickly, but she knew that getting the words firmly in a mind is not easy. She made them repeat each word, each phrase, the sentences. Then she would just talk to them in English so they could get used to how it sounded. She pulled out a small notebook and for every word and phrase she taught them, she wrote them out in phonetic cyrillic and in roman characters. She also wrote down the proper spelling. She told them some English words were not spelled the way they sounded. Tough, for example, and though.

She made them promise to practice with each other as much as they could and to find English speakers they saw every day and to practice with them. She said that Americans did not know any languages except the ones their parents knew.

In Russia we learn languages in school. French for example. But in America, they don't believe a child needs to know languages. And it makes sense, see? You can live in America and never go anywhere people speak another language—America is that big. And to get to places where other languages are spoken you need to take a boat. And it's very expensive. You can live your whole life and never need another language.

She also gave them other advice. Based on what I'm not sure.

When you get to America you need to know a couple of things. The most important is that people went to America to get rich, and most people have adopted the idea that all is fair in business. It's every man for himself. Very few people will help you for the sake of helping. They will expect something—usually payment. Many people will try to cheat you—watch closely for that. Don't leave your belongings unattended unless you are able to lock them somehow. People will eagerly steal what they can. People don't know how to cook good food in America—it will be bland and they love to eat meat. They are like the Germans that way. There is no good beer anywhere in the country. The police will not help you unless you pay them. They will beat you up and arrest you to demonstrate their power over you. They all have guns. They are happy to shoot you. The houses are made of sticks—they burn down all the time. They don't believe in governing wisely. They are all greedy. But, that's why you're going to America! To take advantage of the way people act, to be smarter than they are, and to take their money and make it yours.

My father said he wanted to earn enough to bring Olena over, and he hoped to have a farm one day. He was not interested in wealth. Peter Kence said, I am.

She gathered her books and papers, put on her hat and gloves, and stood. She said

Practice. All day. I'll be back tomorrow at 10.

Then she opened the door and left. My father and Peter Kence were barely able to say goodbye—in English after they looked at the notebook. By then only part of her dress was visible. Then they stood, as gentlemen should, but there were too many things to think about as she left, not the least was the word for goodbye.

The steward walked down the passageway and announced, Lunch.

My father was disappointed. He had hoped she would have been more directly friendly to him, but Kalyna Truss treated Peter Kence and my father exactly alike. She was a good teacher, he thought—she worried about their comprehension and pronunciation. Where she could she tried to explain the words—like, Goodbye is a shortened form of God be with you. She was encouraging and dismissed their apologies for poor pronunciation. She said that if someone tried to speak English, Americans would try to understand him.

They went to lunch and tried to speak English to each other. They found a man returning home in America who understood them to be learning English, and he added some words to their vocabulary—the food they were eating, the utensils, the chairs, the table. He was gracious.

The lessons went on every day at 10 for 2 hours. Kalyna Truss was professional for every lesson. She wore the same outfit every day. She didn't attract a lot of attention because she looked like a school marm and not a beautiful young woman. She didn't linger in the second-class passageways or rooms. She didn't visit the dining room or music room. She didn't go out on the second-class deck.

On the third day, late in the afternoon but before supper, she phoned my father.

You must meet me on the deck as you did before right away. Please come now. I am heading for the place.

My father got out his coat and hat. Peter Kence was on the bed reading his book.

Kalyna Truss?

Kalyna Truss.

It was a matter of time. Don't let her take advantage of you. Or at least promise you'll tell me about it afterwards. Peter Kence laughed. My father wasn't as lighthearted about it.

When he got to the deck, she was on the lounge chair and under the quilt. She didn't look alarmed at all, not the way her voice sounded on the telephone. He sat down next to her as before. She was looking out at the ocean which was rougher than it had been.

The captain says we might hit a storm in a couple of days, Kalyna said to him.

That's the urgent news?

No, but I want to talk about the storm first.

My father was thrown yet again.

Fine.

The captain says it could get very rough. I am fine on ships if the seas are smooth, but rough seas make me very afraid. I might need some help getting through the storm if it turns out to be too rough for me.

How does the captain know about the storm? It doesn't look like bad weather ahead.

He speaks to the captains of other ships using a telegraph. It's a way for ships to communicate by sending signals through the air.

He didn't believe this at all. He didn't say anything but imagined that she was making this up to get something she wanted from him.

A telegraph. It's like the telephone?

Not exactly.

She then sat there quietly for a few minutes.

The sea is beautiful just before dark, don't you think?

He looked out and said, Yes, I suppose it is.

He didn't think so. It was a barren place, like a field that could not grow anything. It was filled with fish, but this wasn't like the bounty a field provided.

There is a man who is following me in first class. He sits near me at meals, and sometimes I see him in the passageways. He is in the music room all the time when I'm there. Well, it seems like he is. He talks to me all the time. I think he has no wife—certainly not on this ship. He isn't bothering me, really, but I want him to not be so friendly. He's not very nice looking.

What do you want me to do?

Come have supper with me tonight, and then sit with me in the sitting room. It's a place for people to gather and talk. We have desserts in there sometimes, and I believe they will tonight.

And who will I be to you?

You will be a friend, a traveling companion, but we happen to be in different classes because of a bureaucratic issue. We should have been traveling in the same class, but we couldn't.

Are there other lies?

This isn't a lie. The bureaucratic issue is that we didn't know each other when we booked passage—weren't friends, either. But why tell all the truth? Several people know I go to second class every day. They'll assume it's to see you. And that's certainly true.

How do I meet you?

Use your token to get into first class. The steward will tell you the direction if you want to stay inside—or it's that door there. Show the token, and ask for directions to the dining room. They will have someone who speaks Russian. Come when your steward calls your supper. We serve a little after you do. And be clean and as neat as you can be.

It seemed a little suspicious to my father, who had been snubbed by Kalyna Truss for 4 or 5 days now. Their trip to the castle was as if it never happened. But he agreed to this because he had agreed in principle already, and he was a man of his—he felt strongly about this. The fact he didn't live up completely to the promise he made his father on his deathbed didn't occur to him on the Pennsylvania, nor in the hospital room. His memories

were convenient.

My father went to the bath room and took a bath. He did it quickly, and when he returned to the cabin he put on his fresh clothes. Peter Kence noticed.

Kalyna Truss?

Kalyna Truss. I am dining with her tonight in first class. She is worried about a man who might be following her. I promised to look imposing.

It's clear she wants a man, at least at times. She looks at you closely during our lessons.

No she doesn't.

Yes, you don't see it because she looks only when you're struggling for a word or looking out the window. But she looks. Will you return tonight?

Of course I will.

The steward called supper.

My father made his way to the first class dining room. People were just being seated when he arrived. The red token worked without him needing to explain anything. He simply showed it. Kalyna Truss was just inside the dining room entrance waiting for him. She was dressed in a very spectacular dress. Light colors, silky material, a floral pattern, a dark blue shawl. Her hair was up, and she wore a very red lipstick.

Shall we?, she said.

She crooked her arm and he linked arms with her at the elbow.

I have my usual seat, and I've asked the waiter to reserve the seat next to it for you. You look good. And best of all, you don't smell overly of being a man.

I bathed.

They sat down, and the meal began. It was served similarly to second class, and the courses were similar, but perhaps the ingredients were a little better and the preparation more expert, but he was not a good judge of that. Only large differences in quality would make a difference for him with food.

He looked around the room and noted that the workmanship was better, and the chairs were more comfortable, and the tablecloth whiter. The lights were brighter or there were more of them, because everything was lit better. There were more waiters, but there were about the same number of people. They were a little better dressed than in second class, but my father didn't stand out. Kalyna Truss stood out. She wasn't dressed in more expensive clothes, just more noticeable clothes.

She introduced him to the others at the table. But only the ones who spoke Russian really paid attention. One of the men was in a dark uniform, and his hat was on the table next to him. The buttons were bright brass, and he wore a full beard but neatly trimmed. Kalyna Truss introduced him last.

Powell Sanuk, I'd like you to meet Captain Smith. He is captain of this ship.

My father was shocked.

Pleased to meet you, sir. Shouldn't you be on the bridge?

The man laughed. He had a deep voice, sounded like he should have been an actor.

No, my first mate takes care of the ship while I'm eating and sleeping. It takes many people to sail a ship like this. I eat in first class every night. I see you are one of Miss Truss's special friends. She's brought you here from second class. A mistake, she says. You are traveling together?

Yes, we are. She is also helping me and our other mutual friend in second class learn English well enough to get by in America.

I'm sure she's a wonderful teacher, he said in English.

My father remembered the phrase to say in situations like this, I don't understand.

But he probably said, I no understand. That's how the literal translation from Russian would be.

The captain laughed again.

Only a few days—you can't be expected to know everything yet.

My father asked about the storm.

Yes, maybe in two days. The Carpathian says it is a severe storm. And not far from the icebergs either. But it may pass to the south of us.

They talked about the ship, how it was made, how it operated. The dangers of the trip. How long he had been captain. They didn't talk much about my father. The captain enjoyed and expected to be the main topic of discussion at the first-class table.

During a lull, my father leaned over toward Kalyna and asked her where the man was she feared. She said that she didn't want my father to stare at him or take any overt actions. She said he was in the room, but that was all. He looked around the room piece by piece over the next 45 minutes, and couldn't be sure he saw anyone suspicious. No one seemed to be looking at her in a predatory way, and she attracted no more attention than one would expect from her attire, which was eye-catching.

The captain was talking to the other diners—in English, French, and German. He turned to my father and said

I believe Miss Truss is holding up well given her father's recent death, don't you think?

Your father..., my father said to Kalyna.

Yes, I've been telling some people about it. I was afraid we might get a telegraph about him, and I wanted the captain to know. Several here in first class do.

Yes, sir, she is holding up quite well. It's really quite surprising.

My father wasn't sure how to react, but he had learned that with Kalyna it was best to go along and then ask for explanations later. He looked at her—stared really. She smiled at him and took a sip of wine.

When the meal was over, the captain excused himself to get back to the bridge. My father went with Kalyna to the sitting room.

Where they sat.



## Back So Soon?

Kalyna Truss was a beautiful woman, but her mind was a labyrinth of unexpected expectations and contradictory surfaces. She wanted what she wanted, and continuity was not part of her deal. When her mind changed the situation changed. They sat in the corner of the sitting room farthest from the door but closest to the windows. Outside the view was of a nearly full moon streaking the sea. The captain had talked about icebergs, but the ship was too far to the south and east.

The chairs were well cushioned, and the tables made of a solid wood with light linen tablecloths. Already the waiters were circulating with coffee and tea even though my father and Kalyna Truss were among the first in the sitting room. Kalyna Truss ordered a coffee, and my father a tea. Cups, sugar, and milk were set on the table, along with small pots—one of hot water, the other of a dark coffee. My father poured for both.

When the ceremony of serving was over Kalyna Truss said

The man was in the room, but he seemed to stare at me less than usual. The first two days I think the presence of the captain at my table discouraged him, but that wore off soon enough. I think your size and youth turned him away tonight. He's not in here.

I didn't see anyone who looked like a threat to you.

Oh, they never look that way to other men. You need to be the prey to notice it.

Where was he?

Another table. I'll point him out another time.

My father sipped his coffee and thought—should he bring up the business about her father? Angering her was not his intention, but it would be nice to know which lies to support. When he looked at her she was staring out the window at the moonlight on the ocean, like a string of diamonds on a wet table. He could see the ship moving against the waves lit by the moon. The moon itself seemed gigantic, near the horizon. He marveled how the light line seemed to move to keep up with the ship. He could feel the engines straining, but it was very much less insistent here in first class and on this upper deck.

Kalyna Truss was lit by the moon too, and also by the dim lights in the sitting room. The noise of conversation was persistent but subdued behind them. Looking around the room, he noticed that they were also in the most dimly part of the room. No one was sitting near them; perhaps the room was a third full.

He fought his desire to reach for her hand.

He decided to ask her;

You told the captain your father was dead. You told me he was alive but didn't want you to make this trip. If I'm to support you on this trip, I should know which story to say if asked.

Kalyna Truss looked at him with displeasure for a second then looked away. She smiled. Some process had passed through her mind. She had calculated something.

My father is alive. I thought the captain and some of the other passengers in first class would be more likely to take care of me if they believed I was alone in the world. And if my father were to telegraph the ship, the captain would not so quickly act on his requests. This would give me time to determine my next move. You see, I view life as a chess game. Or more accurately a backgammon game. You know that game?

No.

It's from Arabia. It combines strategic thinking and chance. Chance limits your choices, but you have choices. And your choices can also limit or expand how chance affects you. It's a superb mirror of real life.

Your real life.

My real life is no different than others'. I make my opportunities, and I accept what God throws my way. Isn't that what you do?

I try to care about other people when I make my opportunities. I don't use people without thought. Do you care that the captain is being deceived.

I consider it. For him, my life is simply the story I tell him. He has no way of knowing what's true and what

isn't. And what we know of ourselves depends on our memories of our experiences and how we thought about them. Are they more accurate or real than the stories I make up?

Other people can verify the truth. Because they experienced the same things.

And when everyone around me has been told the same story, it's the same thing. No one is hurt. And it's a way for people to experience a more thrilling life. Imagine your favorite story ever. Now imagine it happened to someone you knew. Wouldn't it be more exciting?

It would be a lie. Lie's are exciting, but they eventually hurt people.

Have you ever been hurt by a lie?

My father didn't answer. He felt her lies hurt him, but so would learning she didn't have feelings for him. No having feelings isn't a lie. But the way she toyed with—that felt like a lie.

My father is dead to me. He controlled my life, but no more. He is gone and I will never see him again. He will die and I won't know it. He will be buried somewhere and I'll never visit. My mother is controlled by him too, and she probably wishes he were dead to her. It's not a pure lie. Not a total lie. The only part that's true is that his heart still beats.

True for her, he thought, but not true for anyone else. And not even true for her. She knows he's alive. That makes it a lie for her. My father said he saw this plainly at the time.



He stopped his story here for a few minutes. He was tired or he was trying to remember. In front of me, at the time, I thought there might be a lie. The chief hinted with his questions that this wasn't a routine accident he was investigating. And Mr Scherbon had looked at me as if my little dog had died. My mother's temper was uncontrolled a lot of the time. And she hadn't visited the hospital. Did my mother have something to do with the accident? My father lying there knows the truth. He hasn't told me about the accident. The times I asked he just said, it was an accident. No one's fault.

My father was not the most well-liked man in Merrimac. He had his enemies. Could one of them come over and fought him, but he wants to keep it private—the way men do. Was there another woman? The story my father was telling me—he wasn't faithful to Olena. Not completely. Not in his heart. He loved Kalyna Truss. Maybe at that moment in the hospital he still did.

If my mother did it, oh God, she would have had to have goaded the horses. She wouldn't be able to do something like that to him. She is so hateful, do spiteful she just might do something. But she's not smart enough to have planned anything. It had to be an accident. Maybe she had something to do with the accident, but it was an accident. She always said she wanted to kill him—but no one would do that. Not someone in their right mind.



The next day, after their lesson, Kalyna Truss told my father that the captain said that if the sky stayed clear that evening, and the moon was out, that they might see some icebergs. There was a kind of observation deck near the bridge, and that she was invited to come up there and take in the view. A few other passengers would also be invited. She said she would telephone my father right before suppertime and let him know whether he should join her.

Peter Kence said to him

She is using you for something. No one is following her. If someone were to want to harm her, he would have done so already.

She has lots of things with her. Maybe someone is planning to rob her once she gets off the ship.

Her brother is coming to get her, isn't he?

No, he will be away when she arrives. She wants me to help her get her things to her brother's.

It could be true then. But she is too smart for men like us. we are her toys. Toys that can be thrown away. She has already stolen you from Olena.

No, she hasn't.

Don't act foolishly. For you there is no comparison.

Olena is stable and loves me. Kalyna changes like the surface of the ocean with the wind. I cannot love Kalyna.

Yes, tell yourself that over and over. When we get to New York, we need to get to Peabody without stopping overnight. We won't have enough money. I won't sleep under a bridge or in the woods in a country I don't know. With animals around that I don't know. We will end up in jail or worse. We don't know enough to take a risk like that.

Kalyna will have money to hire a carriage. We'll go with her to her brother's, and then we will get the train. It will go smoothly.

Like bringing Fred with us was? And what happened, anyway? You were not yourself for days after that.

I had to hit the man. With a shovel. He might have died.

Died!

He didn't get up. There was a lot of blood.

Lot of blood! We could have ended up in prison in that country. Why did you do it?

He was after us with a gun. He was following our tracks. He was heading for the house where you were hiding. I had to stop him. I didn't have much time to think.

No wonder you've abandoned Olena for Kalyna. You have learned to live a dangerous life. A criminal's life.

No. I've learned to do what I need to in order to survive. And I saved you too.

Save yourself from Kalyna. She is so beautiful that it makes my teeth hurt to look at her. She makes me crazy. She's made you crazy. Someone with her power—how can you trust her?

Trust is not the feeling I feel near her.



The sky stayed clear; the telephone rang; my father went to the first class dining room. The meal was elaborate and full. The captain said they might hit the storm tomorrow night or the day after. That's what he's learning from the telegraph messages from ships ahead of him. But tonight they could see icebergs in the moonlight. He said the icebergs are dangerous, but nothing to worry about. The ship moves too slowly to get close without warning. Many people keep watch for them.

Kalyna Truss asked if my father could join her on the observation deck, and he agreed. There would be 5 or 10 other people up there with them. It was off the bridge and exposed to the cold air and wind, but there would be lounge chairs and thick blankets for all.

The captain told Kalyna and my father privately that the reason for the large meal tonight was that if the storm hit tomorrow, the passengers would need to eat sandwiches only. This meal was to fatten them up, he joked. Kalyna Truss was frightened by the possibility of a storm so severe the passengers couldn't eat, but she hid it from everyone but my father.

My father said he worried about Peter Kence. If the storm was bad, Peter Kence would need him, and he thought Kalyna would need him too. But the storm might pass to the south or might not be too strong. And maybe the storm would frighten him as much as it did them. Then what?, he thought.

After dinner, Kalyna needed to get her fur coat and hat.

Come with me to my cabin. That way you'll know where it is in case I need you to come rescue me.

He followed her; the cabin was near the front of the ship and on the top passenger deck. It overlooked both one side of the ship and the bow. He didn't go inside—didn't even look—but the cabin was not adjacent to any others, and he looked out the portholes on either side to see where it was. A cabin reserved for the very richest person, he thought.

Easy to find, isn't it? We're off to the frigid north.

To reach the observation deck, you had to go up to the bridge and out one side of it. The bridge was filled with men in uniforms. There was a large wheel for controlling the rudder, and a variety of lit dials. Men with binoculars scanned the horizon. The captain was sitting on a tall chair with a tall small table next to it—both bolted to the deck—and he was drinking hot tea.



Miss Truss; Mr Sanuk. This way, please.

And he indicated a door. They must have been just above Kalyna Truss's cabin.

Out on the observation deck, one of the crew handed them a pair of binoculars—ready for use in the cold air, the man told Kalyna in German. She explained to my father that binoculars and telescopes needed to be acclimated to cold air, and until they were, the glass and other components would be changing their sizes and thereby distorting the image.

Kalyna Truss scanned the horizon first, and, not seeing anything, handed them to my father. He saw nothing too. They looked at the moonlight, and the stars. She knew names for patterns of them—the constellations—and tried to teach them to my father, but couldn't see the patterns, just some of the stars she pointed to—the bright ones. She pointed out that the blurry objects he saw were other galaxies. She pointed low on the horizon and said it was a planet. The moon was too bright to see the Milky Way well, but they could see it, and my father told me it seemed brighter than he remembered it from the farm. Certainly this wasn't true. It had to be Kalyna Truss.

They searched the ocean for icebergs; moved from one vantage point to another; talked to the other passengers about what they were seeing. Above them, a pair of men from the crew were in the crow's nest looking for icebergs, and they had been told to tell the passengers in the observation deck if they saw something, but the passengers didn't know that.

The wind began to pick up—it was the outer reaches of the storm, which was over the horizon in front of them. The night air grew bitter, picking up some moisture from the seas which had grown rougher. They were farthest from the bridge; Kalyna Truss was leaning into the railing; my father right next to her.

Oh, I am so cold. Come warm me up. Stand behind me and protect me from the wind. Put your arms around me and keep me warm.

He looked at her from behind her, and he was helpless to do anything but what she asked. He moved behind her and put his hands on her upper arms.

No, not so distant. I am a cold woman. Put your arms all the way around. Put your chest to my back. Stand close. I need warmth, not a gentleman.

She was thin enough that he could wrap his arms almost completely around her. But she was tall enough that the top of her head came to his chin if he bent down. He felt her shivering. They looked out over the ocean like this for a while. The air grew colder, he thought. Then he felt her press back into him, pushing her ass into him. For warmth, he thought. She rubbed the back of her head against his chest. She folded her arms over his and took his hands. He started to move, and was embarrassed.

A man in the crow's nest shouted

Iceberg off the port bow!

She translated, pulling the binoculars to her eyes. It was like a white diamond. Around it the ocean sparkled. She said

It's like a dream. It's a white island devoid of life. It's come from the north and its life will be short. It will add its water to the ocean. The world is such a miracle.

He stepped back, and she turned and kissed him quickly. It was the same kiss as the ride back from the schloss, but in a few seconds and not hours. She was his once more; she handed him the binoculars. He looked at the iceberg for a few minutes, describing what he saw, and how it affected him. He believed himself quite poetic then—his description inspiring and thoughtful. He felt he was observing keenly and Kalyna Truss would be impressed—that she would not believe him merely a farm boy.

He pulled the binoculars from his face, and she was gone. Another couple was there looking at the iceberg, which was growing larger as the ship approached it. They spoke Russian

Yes, quite a sight. Something to remember for years to come.

Hurt that she left suddenly; surprised and his emotions unprepared for it—he was ready to cry. The cold wind in his eyes were priming them for that. Abandoned.

And then he thought, she showed me her cabin. She pressed into me and kissed me. She wants me to come to her cabin tonight. It was her plan. His heart must have felt full then. He loved her so much, I think.

He would wait, though, so no one would suspect. The captain mustn't know. He could feel the immorality of his emotions. His desire. It's taken me years to accept that he had to have felt a powerful desire—my father. Your grandfather.

But as he stood there waiting for enough time to pass, he started to feel that maybe she didn't want him; maybe she had run away from the shame of her outburst of lust. And then he thought that no matter what she wanted or thought, his just going back to his cabin as if she weren't essential to him would be a way to rebalance the power between them. She was hot and cold. And he was always at least warm. Now he could be cold.

He would start down the stairs and when the choice was forced—one way toward Kalyna Truss, the other toward Peter Kence—he would decide. Quickly. Without thought. The way an animal might. He didn't think of her all the way down to her deck.



Peter Kence said, back so soon?

## One Storm

The next morning they got a note from the steward saying that Kalyna Truss would not be able to make their language lesson. No explanation. No telephone call. My father figured it was because he ignored her obvious invitation to her cabin. Peter Kence just thought she was tired out it and wanted a break. He suggested they find one of the passengers who spoke English and practice with him. But they had already had breakfast, and people had scattered back to their rooms. Peter Kence looked in the sitting and music rooms, but found no one who spoke English well enough to volunteer to be teachers. Peter Kence began speaking to my father in English.

Where the train? We goin Peabody Mass. How much it cost? Look out people, machine comin! We like the sandwiches for lunch. You gotta beer?

If ever it was the blind leading the blind. Peter Kence, though, was not going to succumb to the new country without a fight. He was going to make it to Peabody, Mass, and find his brother, and it would be a smooth, uneventful trip. And Pawlie was going to speak English as well as he did. So they practiced.

At lunch the steward announced

We are head toward a storm. The skies will cloud over the rest of today, and the seas will grow rougher through the night and throughout tomorrow. It will be quite uncomfortable. The waves will rock the ship considerable. However, it is nothing to worry about beyond the discomfort. We have reports from ships that have passed through the storm and others in the storm at the present time, and they have had or are having no problems whatever.

Worse news wasn't possible for Peter Kence. He might as well have heard that by this time tomorrow the ship will have sunk and it would be every man for himself with no hope of rescue. Excitedly he asked about the severity of the seas, the soundness of the ship, where were the life preservers, what were the procedures for abandoning ship. At some point the steward cut off the questions in the public forum and sat down with Peter Kence to try to calm him in private. The steward told Peter Kence that he was best off staying in his bed the whole time. That it would be like a rough carriage ride, and to think of it that way. The storm would be much less severe than a hurricane, and this very ship had survived several hurricanes with no problem.

All day Peter Kence stayed in the cabin and grew more apprehensive and nervous. The gathering clouds darkened the cabin earlier than usual, and Peter Kence vacillated from agitated fear to dead calm fatalism. He paced the cabin, tried to read, and jabbered incessantly with my father, who tried everything he could think of to calm the man. And the storm hadn't hit yet.

Through the day the seas progressed from scattered whitecaps to white horses then to spindrift and spray; then to white foam to streaks of foam. The waves increased from moderate to heaping up to breaking crests to waves that rolled over and overhung before breaking. The winds increased slowly from gentle in the morning to gale force once it got dark. When hurricanes hit here, we go through the same progressions, but instead of judging the wind's force from the reaction of the sea, we looked to the trees—how the leaves react at first, then the size of branch and tree that is bent by the wind, and finally what types of trees and how thick they are that fall.

The ship at first didn't seem to react to the bad weather, then it started to roll just perceptively. When it made that transition, Peter Kence started to quiver and got in bed. His plan was to keep busy until the storm really was on them, and then to get into bed and try to weather it by pretending he was on a winter sleigh ride.

As the waves got stronger, the ship started to react more. Once the ship was rolling continuously, Peter Kence started his vomiting. He would run into the toilets, which were nearly right across the passageway. The steward noticed quickly that Peter Kence would be his primary problem during the storm, and he started in on the seasickness remedies. He started with ginger ale. But Peter Kence consistently vomited that up. Soon he had purged himself of all the food he had eaten in the past 24 hours. After that it was dry heaves. He would run to the toilet and kneel down in front of it, holding its sides to keep himself steady as the ship rolled.

My father went with him. He tried to tell Peter Kence that the storm was nothing to fear, that they had been on trains that were more problematic in their steadiness. At the beginning, my father tried the approach of teas-

ing and insulting Peter Kence's courage and manhood. Peter Kence ignored all these comments as if he didn't hear them. He seemed to be listening for the wave that would sneak up on them and then turn the ship upside down. In his fears he imagined the ship upside down and needing to escape somehow by swimming out and then out from under the ship, which was steadily on its way to the bottom. He couldn't imagine opening his eyes in the cold green water, so he imagined trying to find his way blind. When the steward first told them about the storm in front of them, Peter Kence tried to talk my father into learning the way out of the ship with their eyes closed. He didn't keep in mind that they would be upside down—in his worst-case scenario—and so what he was trying to learn might not work well.

After ginger ale, the steward tried Dramamine and Bonine. The first remedy he suggested to Peter Kence was to sit under a tree, but Peter Kence didn't find it funny and began a long rant that soon transferred to my father. My father at first was angered by these outbursts and pointed out that traveling to America was Peter Kence's idea and not his, and therefore any blame for their bad circumstances originated with Peter Kence and not Powell Sanuk.

The real problems started when the first cross wave hit then and the ship wasn't simply rocking from front to back, but was rolling side to side at the same time. This created a complex set of forces that sent Peter Kence to the toilet with a strong urge to throw up. When there was nothing to vomit, Peter Kence brought up what bile there was in his stomach. When he would come back into the cabin and climbed into bed, Peter Kence would curl up like a baby with his knees as close to his chest as possible. He tried to breath deeply and evenly.

This helps me not puke, he said.

When the cross waves got worse and the ship's motion was completely unpredictable, Peter Kence started crying. He kept saying

Bud' laska. Bozhe miy. Dopomozhy meni—Please. My God. Help me.

He wailed these over and over. My father stopped being crass and looked upon Peter Kence as a child who needed comforting. A small child. He sat on the bed and rubbed Peter Kence's back. When Peter Kence ran to the toilet my father guided him in the unsteady passageway.

The boilers were stoked to their maximum. Below decks the men assigned that night to shoveling the coal into the furnaces were working as hard as men could. The black smoke—could it be seen—was bursting from the smokestacks, and the gale force winds quickly scattered it. Sometimes they could smell the coal smoke in the cabin. Breezes streamed down the passageways, even though all the doors and barricades were shut. The ship vibrated heavily from the engines pushing as hard as those machines could. It was important that the ship push through the brunt of the waves coming at them. Up on the bridge, my father imagined, Captain Smith was yelling orders, examining the waves for their prevailing direction, adjusting the force of the engines, reading reports from other ships also in the storm. He didn't use just his experience and judgment, but as many sources of information as he could. He wasn't a seat-of-the-pants guy, my father believed. He never believed that.

Peter Kence prayed when the worst rolls started, and he didn't stop until there was a lull movements. My father said he felt more compelled as the storm worsened to comfort Peter. They weren't close friends when the journey started, but they had been through a lifetime of experiences since then. Peter Kence had thought enough of my father to offer him a way to get out of Teremcy and his predicament. And the least my father could do was show some compassion.

He rubbed Peter Kence's back and his head. He said as many soothing things as he could think of. He explained that God wouldn't let them come this far only to drown alone in the cold dark sea. He repeated what the steward said about the mildness of this storm compared to what the ship could take, and that the captain of the ship had told him the very same things.

Eventually the crying and agitation took its toll on Peter Kence, and he fell asleep. My father was relieved but surprised. Exhaustion must have overcome Peter Kence. Either that or his conscious mind had given up on running through the bad scenarios that seemed ever more likely as the storm worsened. Good thing, too, because the worst was still to come in the dead of night. It was 11pm.

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My father had gotten into bed and was starting to fall asleep even though the violence of the storm made it nearly impossible to find a way to relax. When the telephone rang, he picked it up immediately so Peter Kence would not wake up. It was Kalyna Truss.

Idy syudy. Shvydko, bud' laska. Ty meni potriben. Come here. Quickly, please. I need you.

I'm telling you the Ukrainian for what they said when they were frightened, so you can hear the way the panic sounded to my father. He didn't hesitate to get ready to go, though a small fragment of him knew that leaving Peter Kence was cruel. On the other hand, he was sleeping. When he woke, though, he would be more scared because he would imagine my father had fled to some safer part of the ship without him. He wrote a short note on ship's stationary—

Kalyna Truss called. She needs me. Back as soon as I can.

She said she'd leave the door unlocked and he should just come in. He started for her cabin, but the ship was thrashing about so much that he needed to walk slowly with his hands on the walls. Sometimes a rush of sea water would come down the passageway. The doors were all closed. One time a second-class steward came down the passageway and told my father something, but in English. My father, not sure what he was saying pulled out the red token that was his passport to first class, and that seemed to appease the steward, who let my father pass.

It took him about 20 minutes to make it to the first class section of the ship. He was aware the storm was rough, but trying to walk from one end of the ship to the other showed him how rough it was. Yet the storm's force had not yet peaked.

When he got to Kalyna Truss's door, it was unlocked. He opened it as gently as he could in case she, like Peter Kence, had fallen asleep. With the screaming wind outside, the sharp metallic creaking of the ship, the thrum and vibration of the engines, this was likely a foolish idea. He didn't know what to expect when he walked in. He hadn't looked in. It was large, and there were a couple of siderooms. It was dark and cold—the electric heater was off, and the coal-burning stove as well—he would learn this later. His eyes adjusted to the dark. He walked to the center of the room and tried to look for where Kalyna Truss could be. The room he was in was a sitting room.

She wasn't there.



## Avoidance Dynamic

Kalyna Truss's stateroom was several decks higher than my father's—the rolling and the rocking were much more severe up there. My father tried to stand in the middle of the room, but he was jolted from side to side. He saw a table and some chairs. A sofa. No one was in this room, he was sure. He went to the window that faced the bow. Even in the dark he could see waves coming toward the ship. One of them crashed over the bow and spray from the break hit the window. From the side window he could see waves that seemed as high as the deck he was on, but no waves crashed from the side while he was watching.

He started to leave, but a strong sideways lurch sent him into one of the table's chairs, and it fell over. From one of the rooms he heard her voice

Pawlie? Are you there?

Yes, in the room.

Come in here. It's the bedroom. I am in the bed to keep from falling down.

Following her voice, he found the room she was in. The bed was large, and there were hanging curtains all around it, pulled back on one side. There was also a small, low table and 2 chairs. There were no lights on in the room. When she sat up he could see her from the motion. He pulled one of the chairs to the side of the bed and sat down. The jumbled movement of the ship made everything difficult; it was hard to move the chair, he kept nearly losing his balance; even when sitting, the chair would tilt and he'd have to grab the bed frame to stay up. The wind and metal-on-metal strainsounds were very loud. Talking was not easy.

I'm glad you're here. I was terrified.

I'm here now.

She thrust her arm out from under the layers of blankets and took his hand. She was lying on her side facing him. The swaying ship made him tug on her hand now and then as his balance in the chair was always shaky.

I've been in bad weather at sea before—in the Baltic and the Black Sea—but not like this. The ship feels like it will tip completely over.

Whenever there was a lurch or tremor, she would grab his hand tightly and pull him toward her. When she spoke, he could hear she was sobbing at the same time. She was as afraid as Peter Kence, and perhaps more afraid. He tried to comfort her by telling her the same things he told Peter Kence—that the boat was safe, that it had withstood worse than this, that the captain was experienced, that there were other ships nearby and the captain was communicating with them with the telegraph. He said the storm was not as severe as the worst he had seen in Teremcy, and all the houses survived that. He held her hand in both his hands—one holding it and the other on the back of her hand. He stroked her hand and spoke as softly as he could. He tried to brace himself with his legs and feet against the bed so his movements in response to the ship didn't seem out of control.

Is the door closed?

Yes.

Did you lock it?

No.

Please go lock it. The stewards all have keys in case they must come in. I don't want to worry about people coming in if they are wandering the passageways and need to get to safety.

My father went to lock the door. The task took a couple of minutes because he wasn't able to walk far without losing his balance and nearly falling over. He locked the door with the key that was in the lock. When he got back to the bedroom door, Kalyna Truss said

Close that door too. Sometimes there are breezes that come into the main room and I want to keep those from getting in here.

The bedroom was on the side of the ship and not facing forward. The windows faced out over the mad ocean waves. The wind going past the window made a horrible sound. The window wasn't like a house window, but was held by a thick metal frame that was bolted to the ship's exterior. The glass was very thick and seemed impervi-

ous to almost any sort of blow. There was no way to open the windows that he could see, and so to escape, a passenger would need to brave the passageways out to a deck. He was surprised they hadn't drilled people on how to use the life preservers and lifeboats he had seen. He had to ask a steward what the odd jackets were he saw in his cabin, and he had been instructed on its use. The steward also pointed out the lifeboats and the direction to go to get to the deck where the lifeboats were. But were all the passengers expected to ask questions?

After looking around he sat back down in the chair. A lull in the violent motion of the ship also lulled my father and Kalyna Truss into a feeling that the storm had turned, that the worst was over and that the night would calm down. Then the ship dipped sharply in the direction of the side windows and a wave crashed heavily against the window, shaking the ship and rattling everything in the room. The chair tipped and my father fell to the floor with a sharp thud to the floor. Reacting to the wave, the ship rolled back from the blow and my father also rolled in the direction of the bed. Kalyna Truss was thrown from one side of the bed to the other and she screamed. She believed the window couldn't withstand a force like that and had closed her eyes to the possibility of the room becoming flooded with sea water. But the window survived. My father got to his elbow and looked out the window. All he could see was foam blowing across the glass. The ship resumed its slightly more predictable rocking—front to back with a lesser side to side.

But Kalyna Truss didn't rebound from the sharp shock as well as my father did. She said in a frantic voice Please, get in bed with me. I'm scared and I don't want you to be injured.

He looked at her and hesitated. The request was unexpected, but so were the circumstances.

Take off your shoes and your pants, Your shirt too. It will be too hot under these blankets if you leave all your clothes on. This is a rescue not a seduction.

When faced with a situation that's impossible to analyze logically, the mind always acts according to its emotions and hidden resources for understanding. My father sat up and removed his shoes and his shirt. Undid his pants and scooted them off. As he approached the side of the bed, Kalyna Truss pulled the blankets down and he lay down on his back. She flipped the blankets over him and said Thank you.

The bed was warm—he had taken the spot where she had been lying. He lay there like a log—his arms tightly at his sides. Kalyna Truss was over on the far side of the bed, as if a wall separated them. He became more comfortable at this—he had half expected her to embrace him immediately or kiss him. But it seemed to him that fear was her first motivator and concern for his safety might have been part of it, too. The bed seemed to be looser than the floor and chair—when the ship rolled from side to side, the bed responded with exaggeration.

You needn't have arranged a storm to invite me to bed, my father said. He meant it as a joke, but Kalyna Truss didn't appreciate it.

Had I wanted you in bed, I would not have waited until half the trip was over.

Then if you don't want me here, why am I?

You promised to look after me. So look after me.

Her voice was still quavering from emotion. She might have been trying to get her mind off the storm, but her mind was not cooperating completely. He could feel her shaking a well. This was not a sexual prank.



There was some light coming from a small adjacent room—it was the toilet, but my father didn't know that yet. Sometimes that light was enough to illuminate her face, when she was positioned right. He looked at her profile as she lay on her back. She was tense, and the tension washed over her with each jolt of the ocean. She had her 13-year-old face on. He could see her cheeks were wet. She didn't say anything for a long time.

He thought that she was more afraid than Peter Kence was. Maybe she had a more specific fear of water—she had traveled much more than Peter Kence had. My father began to think of her as child, under his protection. Talking to her had helped a little, as it had with Peter Kence, so possibly some of the physical comforting he had done with Peter Kence would be welcome.

He pulled out one arm and put it on her pillow behind her head. Then he repositioned his arm so his hand could reach her head, and he started to run his fingers through her hair, lightly touching her scalp—the way his

mother had when he was a boy. Under the swoosh of wind outside the window and the creaking of the ship as it lunged through the waves, he thought he heard her catch her breath—and then slowly release it after holding it for a short while. The sort of breathing one did when expecting a pain to take hold. Her breathing became even and a little heavier—asleep? He continued to stroke her head like this hoping that she would fall into a deep sleep and be able to stay asleep until the storm was past.

After about 5 minutes, Kalyna Truss turned on her side toward my father and put her fingers on his temple. She ran her fingers through his hair front to back, and then laid her hand on his cheek. For a time she continued this way—my father wasn't able to guess time well. He closed his eyes because the strokes were so soft. He was not aroused by it, but was calmed. His grandmother had stroked his head like this, and he associated the feelings with supreme comfort and safety.

Then she moved herself closer and put her head on his shoulder, her hand on his chest, and she put her knee on his leg. Her other arm was between them. She was wearing a soft sleeping gown, probably flannel because it had a soft, slightly rough surface. He could feel her breath on his chest as she breathed—evenly and calmly, but heavily. Almost like a practiced gesture, he moved his arm under her head—she lifted her head—and with his arm under her neck, he put his hand on her arm. He turned his head toward her and breathed in her smell. He felt like he could lie there like that for the rest of his life.



My father must have fallen asleep. He said that he felt Kalyna Truss moving toward the foot of the bed. She climbed out and walked, slowly and with her arms out by her sides, to the room with the light on in it. He heard some jostling around, and then a stream hitting porcelain. Kalyna Truss was doing *choonies*. My father turned on his side toward the room. A faucet turned on for a few seconds.

Kalyna Truss walked into the room during a lull in the waves. The light behind her just barely lit her enough to see her silhouette. She reached down and grabbed the hem of her night dress and lifted it up over her head and threw it to the side. He could see her shape for a few seconds, then she walked back to the foot of the bed and climbed in. She turned onto her side facing away from him. They were facing away from each other—she didn't say anything.

My father was not certain of what he saw. Perhaps she was wearing more form-fitting clothes underneath the night dress. Maybe she was hot. It was still dark outside, and the storm, if anything, had gotten more severe. The lulls, though, came with more frequency, as if the storm had traded severity for regularity.

When he thought he had waited enough time for his turning to not be aggressive, he turned onto his other side, facing Kalyna Truss. He put his underside arm down toward his feet but out in front of him—to keep the circulation going in his arm. Neither a mistake nor fully intentional, his fingers brushed her skin—he guessed he had touched her ass. He moved his hand away quickly, but he didn't feel her move away. She was naked.

He let this settle into his head. Middle of a storm in the middle of the ocean with a woman scared to death, but the two of them lying in her bed, and she is naked. He had been in bed with Olena before, but that was part of a stab at lovemaking. A romantic feeling between them. The way things would unfold. But here there was no intention on either side—he was sure, or mostly certain—to become romantic, to marry, to make love, to do anything like that. Sure, their relationship was ill defined, and he couldn't say whether there was even any affection to it. But here it was. No tools had been given to him to think about the situation. It needed to be handled by guessing. And if he did something she didn't want? Would she report him to the captain as an attacker of some kind? He decided to remain passive—the rider with no reins in his hands nor stirrups around his feet. Just along for the ride. The Kalyna Truss ride.

She began to move—she moved backward toward him. She placed her ass into his lap and pushed her back into his chest. She repositioned her pillow so the back of her head was close to his face. Their positions mirrored each other's, and he was about as close to her as he could get—all parts of him were close. He was sure now that she wasn't wearing a form-fitting outfit under her night dress. His natural reaction was to move his arms to more comfortable positions. His downside arm—he put it under her pillow and let his hand stick out the other side;



his upside arm—he put it around her waist and his hand up near her shoulder. The arm around her waist was positioned between her breasts, and he clasped her shoulder. In return, she reached out and laced her fingers with his—the hand under her pillow. She nestled in even closer and sighed once. The ship resumed its dance, and they were locked into position solidly as the ship rolled, the room rolled, the bed rolled, and the waves hit the window more frequently. The rattling increased. The ship’s metallic groaning grew louder. The force of the wind screeched more incessantly past the window and parts of the ship outside her stateroom. He felt the cold air stirring in the room with each increase in the wind.

He grew aroused.



When a wave hits a ship from the side, there are several things that might happen. The obvious one is when the wave slams into the side of the ship. But a not-so-obvious one is that before the hit, the ship will slide sideways into the cavity that’s right in front of the wave. When the ship hits the wave, the sideways slide is halted abruptly. The wave lifts the ship, then, and it slides down the other side.

This sliding and slamming can really jolt the ship. Such slams were happening more often, which meant that the direction of the storm—or of the ship—had changed, away from a direct onslaught. When such forces acted on the ship, they also acted on Kalyna Truss and my father, pushing them together, pulling them apart. If you imagine them holding each other in perfect stillness, you won’t understand that they were moving against each other against their wills.

During a quiet moment, Kalyna Truss said to my father in little more than a whisper

You need not wear anything in my bed.

My father told me that his decision didn’t take long. Kalyna Truss, he said, was unimaginably beautiful. Her skin was like silk to his hands. Her smell, her form—all these shouted for him to be closer to her. The lust he felt must have been overwhelming, but he knew he could not have intercourse with her. He could not get her pregnant. Maybe this was her plan, but his involved a farm, Peabody, Massachusetts, and Olena joining him. Kalyna Truss was never going to live on a farm, and if she did, she would soon bore and how would she remedy that? Peter Kence told him all the theories about class and elitism, but my father was raised to understand and respect the fact that he was not more than a peasant. And whether he was a peasant in a feudal system or a capitalist one or a Bolshevik one didn’t matter—he would still be poor, would need to labor without cease, and in the end need to be satisfied with little, or even next to nothing. With Olena—she would understand such a life, and the realities of the world that made it the only possibility. He would never have a salon in a garret in Berlin or London to entertain artists and the great creative minds of the age. His intellect was small, his creativity nonexistent, and his chances for getting ahead limited to pure luck, dumb luck, the universe’s unexpected little joke on everyone else.

Naturally he viewed this ocean crossing—and this storm and the circumstances he found himself in at that very moment—the single bit of luck that he could depend on. Just don’t impregnate her. The price of that could be enormous—fatal even.

So he released himself from her and, unsteadily, walked to the bathroom, nearly falling over once or twice. He did *choonies* and then took off the rest of his clothes. He smelled himself, especially his genitals. Hanging onto the sink, he managed to wash off a little so that he wouldn’t send her running. When he made it back to the bed, she was still facing away, toward the wall.

He got in bed, pulled the blankets over himself, and then moved up behind her the way he was when he left. He put his arms around her again, the same way. He was fully aroused, and his penis was between his belly and her ass—nothing was more obvious to him than she must feel it precisely for what it was. In response, she took her free hand and moved the hand on her shoulder to her breast. He opened his hand and held it. Soft, but firm when squeezed; with his thumb he felt her hard nipple. She pushed her ass back into him.

The ship made their hugging dynamic. When she rolled over to face him, he put his hands on her waist just above her hips. He reached behind and cupped her from behind. He pulled her close and he could feel her

breasts on his chest. When she was close like this, facing him, he could feel her public hair with his penis. But they formed an unspoken rule: neither shall touch the other's genitals with their hands.

Facing her, he sometimes would cup her breasts in his hands, run his fingers over her nipples, stroke her cheeks, pull her toward him. The battering of the ship added bits of unpredictability to this. He would reach for her hair and poke her in the nose; reach for her hip and grasp her ass; put his cheek next to hers and they would bump foreheads.

In all the positions they tried, he finally moved his lips to hers and they kissed. He felt he would burst. She grunted and spoke to him in French. Unable to stop himself, he moved his mouth over her face and was about the move to her breasts when his rational mind came back.

Many times that night he would feel himself pulled to the edge of the cliff—the cliff whose fall he would never survive—and he would pull back; he would calm his arms, his legs, his heart. He would clasp her tightly then—maybe so couldn't sense the way his mind and emotions were struggling. He could not be weaker than her.

She could feel his desire without any confusion, but she could never conquer him this way.

Even if it killed him.

## Kalyna Truss is Everything

Morning arrived. The storm was not over but the severe waves were past. Gone were the patches of foam driven by the wind, the overhanging waves, the airborne spray cloudy the sky; the sea was no longer white; the spindrift was nearly gone from the edges of crests; but the sea was still heaping up, and the long, long, deep waves and swells kept the ship rolling. The violence and unpredictability were gone. Outside the window the skies were not clear but were light enough that the sea opened before them, white streaks, valleys approaching, the ship responding like a gentle woman to a slight but insistent nudging—in a direction she didn't prefer but also didn't mind.

When my father woke up, he was facing the window, facing away from Kalyna Truss. It took him a few minutes to recall where he was, his guesses beginning with the farm, then the rooming house, then the cabin with Peter Kence, and finally the smells and look of it in its blues and tans reminded him it was Kalyna Truss's stateroom. In fact, her bedroom. On the floor he saw her night dress, and his brown, heaped up clothes. The table was over by the window, the chairs on their sides. The curtains hanging from a topframe of the bed were closed except for the side he was facing.

Coming to him, surrounding him—her smell, the smell of her perfume, of her shampoo. Kalyna Truss, the intellectual seductress, the toyer with emotions, the encompasser of men's souls—this was her realm and he was caught in it like a mink in a swamp trap. In the minutes it took to get close to being fully awake, he noticed his nakedness. In the warmth of the blankets and comforters, he felt like a child in a mother's bed, enfolded in her aura, in her sphere of influence. Sometimes when he was a young child, he would awake early—around dawn, maybe before—and his mother would call him to her bed, would open the covers to him. He remember the heat of the bed, a more profound heat than his own bed; his mother could produce like a high-burning furnace. Were all women like this?

Closer to awake, he noticed the bed moving with a smaller, more confined motion—and a sound, like bedclothes rustling—something relaxed but insistent about the motion and the sounds. From behind him he heard Kalyna Truss breathing—hesitant with slight gasps. He rolled over and faced her. Her eyes were closed and she was biting her lower lip. In his complete innocence he wondered if she were injured, or ill. She was trembling and there was some sweat on her forehead, which was furrowed. Looking down the length of her body under the blankets, he saw that there were nearly invisible movements under them, like a small animal under a sheet. He watched her face and she never opened her eyes; sometime she would turn her head away from him. She seemed in deep concentration, as if warding off a pain or an agony.

She let out a stuttered oh, and he became worried. He reached for her, putting one hand under the small of her back and the other over her belly—as he had done the night before—to grasp her far hip and pull her closer, but her arm was across her belly and her hand was between her legs. He held her arm below the elbow, and could feel her muscles moving. He looked at her face and she was still turned away. The movements corresponded to the motion in the bed he was feeling.

He followed her arm down to her hand, and then he realized she was rubbing her genitals—he could feel the coarse hair, and her hand was circling with force. She was trying hard.

Now you might wonder how naïve someone had to be to not be entirely sure what was going on. I'm sure you, Richie, knew exactly what was happening when I started to describe it—you're over 50 years old—but my father at that age had not been with any woman but Olena, and I doubt they were as, let's say, adventurous as Kalyna Truss was. He might have experienced Olena having an orgasm, but from what he told me, their sexual experiences were more like hugging and kissing—in bed, naked certainly—not much more, I think. Women did what Kalyna Truss was doing, but it was typically something they kept to themselves. Not all women did it, of course, but a lot did. My guess is that he was shocked at first to think that women did what men did. Satisfying themselves. He was probably not aware there was anything for a woman to satisfy herself with. He was familiar with animals, and knew how they looked.

He watched her. Was she aware of it? Probably. He was holding her. One hand was on her hand. His arm was around her. She would sometimes put her hand clenched into a fist under her back; sometimes she would hold and knead her breast. Sometimes she would face forward, sometimes she would put her face under his chin. He felt her moving her hips—swirling them, pushing them upward. His legs opened and closed. He moved his fingers down toward hers—he was curious, and she seemed deeply in oblivion to him. She continued to make her small sounds. He felt her fingers pushing hard into herself. He moved his fingers around and felt a slippery wetness, and he could tell that what was down there was not simple and smooth. He kept his hand there.

In a while—probably a long while—her head started to move up and down, as if she were nodding. Yes. She lifted up a tiny bit, and he could feel her hand slow down. Then she convulsed and almost sat completely upright. Her mouth was open. She almost stopped her hand moving, but it was just a slow down and an increase in the pressure. She let out a guttural, long moan. Her convulsions were like little spasms, and each time one hit, she turned more and more away from him, first her head, and then her body, until she was on her side and almost completely curled up. He moved behind her, and the spasms became less often—and were more like jerks. She pulled her hand that was on her hand up to her chest, and he cupped her breast. All she said, the only thing from the night before until quite a bit after this

Oh my.



Not long after, she turned suddenly toward him—he needed to pull his arm away from her chest. She faced him and put her leg up on his hip, and she grabbed a hold of him and rubbed his penis up and down her vulva. He could feel her wetness, and her hand around him was almost more than he could bear. He put both hands on her ass and started to pull her toward him, but she let go, sat up, and then threw the blanket off herself. She scooted off the end of the bed, out past the curtain, which she tied off to the bedposts.

She walked over to the electric heater and turned it on. Then she went into the toilet. My father turned over onto his other side and he heard the sounds. She ran some water and was in there for about 5 minutes. The room was small and it was beginning to warm up from the electric heater which had a small fan.

She came out of the toilet and went to the window; she looked out for a few minutes; the sky was low and gray, and the white foam and spray mottled the sea which continued to heap and surge. He watched her hips adjusting to the level of the floor. She was thin, but womanly. Her skin was just a little dark, and her hair was messed up and matted against her head. When he looked down at her ass and legs, he could see—well, he could see what there was to see.

Without a word, she went into the main room and he heard her talking to someone on the telephone. He heard her walk to the door, unlock it, and then she came back into the bedroom, closing and locking the door behind her.

Coffee, scones, and jam, she said.

By then the room was quite warm—the heater and fan were very efficient, and the room was small. Kalyna Truss lay down on the bed, on her side with her hand holding up her head supported by her elbow. My father stared at her—she had put herself in front of him as if on display, and he did what probably any man would do and looked at her from one end to the other. He didn't give me any specifics—I was only 21 when he told me this story, and in much less detail than this—but I know that, to him, she was stunning, she was unlike any other woman he ever met, before or after, or any woman he read about or saw photographs of. When I tell myself this story, I imagine her simply watching him. For her, this was her greatest gift. It was the bait in her trap, whatever her trap may have been. She was certain, I would say, that she had him. He was caught.

She waited. They heard the door to the stateroom open and heard a cart roll in, then the sounds of plates and flatware. A pause, then the cart rolling out and the door closing. The key in the lock from the outside. She said

Do you need relief?

He closed his eyes and nodded.

Then do it for me. I want to watch you.

His desire was too strong to think objectively about her request. He looked at her while he worked. Her face and eyes, her mouth; her breasts and their movement; her cunt, buried in its hair—up and down her he looked. And she looked at him: his face, his eyes; his chest and hand; his cock and his reaction. As she watched, he became more aroused, a stronger sexual urge came over him. He said his chest felt like it would burst open, the feelings in him were too intense to bear for long. He tried to go slow to prolong the experience, but he couldn't. While he was releasing, she came to him and held him.

What a mess, she said, laughing.

When it was over, it was like a steel door closing on him; the situation became clear, and he was ashamed. What he had done was beyond what any civilized person should ever do. Not even married people did these things; this is what happened in brothels and with prostitutes. The pure animal in people. Didn't God make us better than that? But she held him, and stroked his head. In a minute he fell asleep.



He was asleep only a few minutes—the exhaustion from all that tension from the storm, from the night with Kalyna Truss. He cleaned up and put on his clothes. The door to the main room was closed; he went in. She was sitting by the table eating a scone and having a coffee. She was still naked. He said

The storm's over. I need to get back to Peter Kence.

Yes, that seems to be the best thing for him now.

She stood, walked to him, and kissed him gently and slowly on the lips.

I'll never forget last night and this morning. You may not believe it, but I've never done anything like this before.

He looked down at her; she showed no shame, no shyness, no embarrassment at all. Her beauty was like a dream to him. She had on her 27-year-old face. Her smell was complex—perfume and sex, he thought. Then she walked into the bedroom, turned and said

Our lessons. We resume tomorrow.

She closed the door. He felt a drop in his spirit, as if he had heard someone important but far away had died. And something had died.



You left me for her? And stayed there all night and most of the day? Left me to suffer alone?

You were asleep.

For a few minutes. I woke up and you were gone. I saw you note and thought That bastard. I hung on with both hands to the bedframe. I cried so loud, the steward came in and sat with me.

Peter Kence went on describing his torment for a long time. All the rest of the day and into the night. My father had hoped that Peter Kence would have been broken of his fear the way a horse was broken. But Peter Kence seemed to relish being the victim of the universe's cruelty, and enjoyed that now he had the upper hand on my father. But he was really quite upset, and years later when Peter Kence would visit us in Merrimac, he would bring up this story, though he never named Kalyna Truss—it was simply Some Woman.

He never, though, asked for the details of that night—never teased my father about having sex with Kalyna Truss. Did he know all he needed to know?

The day passed though, and all the others on the Pennsylvania. About halfway across, a man came into their cabin and asked for their tickets. Peter Kence got his out, and my father was still looking when the man thanked them and walked out.

Kalyna Truss came to their cabin every day at 10 and taught them more English—speaking mostly, but some reading and writing too. They would need to read street signs and menus, and she prepared lessons for those things. She had my father dine with her when she thought perhaps the mystery man might be stalking her, and she even had him to her stateroom on occasion for coffee, scones, and jam. They never repeated their night



together, though they were still physical—they held hands, they kissed, they even would cuddle up on her sofa; and there were some episodes. She knew, I think, they she couldn't just rely on her other wiles and skills; she needed to maintain her physical grip on him. She simply changed the balance. There was one time after one of their scone breakfasts, when she wanted to go out to the captain's observation deck when she thought they might see Greenland, and she was talking to him and mentioned she wanted to change into something warm; she went into the bedroom—still talking, not paying much attention—and my father walked in there with her, expecting her to put on her warm clothes, but she took off all her clothes, searched for her warm underwear, got out the clothes she wanted to wear, and finally dressed. My father just watched and listened.

Years later, he said he figured out that her body was not something purely private and intimate for her the way it was for most people, especially women, but it was a tool she could use, like her knowledge and speaking skills, her expertise in argumentation and her sense of aesthetics. That she put her body on display like that was no more a big deal than showing off her knowledge of French by speaking to a waiter in French. At the time—on the voyage—he believed she had given him something special, but did she really? He didn't think so.

At different times she reminded him of the man who was stalking her, how her father might have contacted someone to find her and bring her back, her brother waiting for her, but being away in the capital and how he had promised to help her with all those things. She spoke of photography, and they spent time walking through the ship and looking for good photographs together. He would point out the places he thought would work well, and she would explain the technical difficulties of what he found. She would point out her idea of good photographs, and he would try to say why he liked them or didn't. She talked about writers she liked, painters, sculptors, and my father simply listened and asked questions, because he didn't know almost any of them.

If her previous strategy was to seduce his body, her new one was to seduce his mind, to show him a wide new expanse, just as she had shown him a new perspective on intimacy. Not only intimacy in how close you could get, but new ways of being close. The world he learned in Teremcy—from his parents to his few school years to his friends—seemed grey compared to the world Kalyna Truss painted for him. There were few limits in that world and unlimited possibilities. If only he could become educated like her, have her talent, have her.

Even though they weren't physically as close as that night, they grew closer, and Peter Kence felt left out. He started to plan for him to make the trip to Peabody himself. He didn't feel as sure as he did when he thought about traveling with my father, but he had learned English as well as my father, was able to speak some French, which would help, he heard, once he got to Boston and many people spoke it, and he knew which trains and boats to take to get to his brother's. Would my father go off with Kalyna Truss? Peter Kence believed he might. And others—the stewards, the captain, and some of the Russians and Ukrainians on the ship thought so as well. They would see my father and Kalyna Truss strolling the decks at dusk, see them holding hands on the deck chairs, dining together, and some even saw my father go to her cabin.

My father said he made lists of good things and bad things about Kalyna Truss versus Olena. Who was more steadfast, who more moral, who more beautiful, who smarter, who more comfortable, who would make the better mother, who the better farmer, which would love him most, best, longest, who would be one he remembered most on the bed where he would die.

I knew the answer to that one. It wasn't Olena. Kalyna Truss was the one he spoke of the most. He wanted to tell someone who cared about him what made him what he had become. All the good and bad, all that was worthy and all that was dirty about him. I think I could see how the pieces came together to be my father—the one I knew, all but one piece. In his story, and by everything Peter Kence ever said about my father and trip—there was no mention of drinking too much. Never was he drunk. Never more than a civilized person. That had come after the story.



When the ship got close to America they were not very far from the coastline—first Newfoundland, then Nova Scotia. They could see fishing boats every day; birds followed those boats and visited the ship. They thought they could smell land—the smells of cut grass, fires burning, food cooking, the smells of a shoreline,

even firs in the deep woods. The time of the sea voyage was nearly over, and Kalyna Truss maybe felt nostalgia for what came before, or she felt she needed to solidify her hold on him. One morning after their lesson, she asked my father to come to her stateroom after supper. When he arrived, the room was dark but the bedroom was lit—lit with just some of the electric lights but with some candles. Kalyna Truss told him there was one last thing he needed to know before he got to America. Her last personal lesson to him on the ship. She asked if he were ready, and he said he was. She leaned into him and kissed him for a long minute.

Sit down, she commanded.

He sat. The chair faced the bed. She said

First, fair's fair.

She turned away from him and dropped her chemise—underneath she was bare; she lay down on the bed, facing him, her legs toward him. She repeated her performance the morning after the storm, but this time in full view. When she was finished, and her glow was fading, she said

Second, there are more ways than you might know to kiss a woman.

She raised her knees and pushed her heels close to her bottom. Wide. She unfolded.

Come here.



Nova Scotia, then Maine, but farther off its coast. Then around Cape Cod toward New York. My father and Peter Kence weren't aware they were traveling past their final destination. Then Long Island. For these few days, the passengers started their packing, having made themselves quite at home for the nearly 3-week trip. They washed their clothes; they washed themselves. They exchanged some gifts with each other, names and addresses, promises to meet. Many lifelong attachments were made on this trip—and all the other trips just like it. You could say my father and Kalyna Truss made such an attachment. Peter Kence and my father grew close too, even with the difficulties Kalyna Truss presented. Stewards came around and told the passengers what to expect when they got to New York—what papers to have, what questions they would have to answer, the tone to expect.

Peter Kence and my father and all the first and second class passengers would be examined by physicians on the ship, and their immigration would be taken care of there. The ship would dock at a pier in New York where the cursory inspections would take place—the idea was that if you could afford a first or second class ticket, you were well off enough to not be fated to become a charge of the city or state. Steerage passengers would disembark to Ellis Island by ferry and be processed like livestock. If there legal papers were in order and they were reasonably healthy, they could expect to spend about 5 hours being processed.

When the ship neared the entrance to the harbor—or so they thought—they began to gather on deck. The captain had told Kalyna Truss that the trip into the harbor would take a while, and even after they docked there would be plenty of time to gather her things before the inspectors came on board. She was invited to the captain's observation deck, and she invited my father and Peter Kence to join her.

The ship was scheduled to dock around noon the next day, and so around 9 in the morning they would all go to the deck. My father and Peter Kence ate supper together in the second-class dining room, and it was a special meal of veal and duck with trimmings not much different from a Thanksgiving dinner. Peter Kence and my father decided they would try to speak English exclusively until they got to Peter Kence's brother's house. Peter Kence hoped they would get there together. And it's easy to imagine them speaking in halting but passable English, but even on his deathbed when he had been here for about 30 years, he sounded like someone just barely able to get a thought across, and his accent was still as greasy as the kielbasa my mother made. Back then—*hos podee pomilloy*—they sounded like a comedy album. Like a Russian José Jiménez. Remember, they were taught by a Ukrainian woman who probably had as bad a grasp on the language as they came to have. They didn't listen to native speakers.

The meal was good, and people were singing songs, laughing, getting ready to say their goodbyes. The stewards brought out beer and some people went to their cabins to get their instruments, and a folk dance broke out—first the Germans, then the Danes, then the Russians, then the Hungarians, then the Ukrainians. They

played their country's songs and their people danced their dances. Soon they would be in America—not yet Americans, but on their way. They were filled with hope. And you know, not all of them achieved their dreams. They needed their dreams to reach ahead 2 or 3 generations. Their grandchildren might be successful, less likely their children, and least likely themselves. That would be you, Richie. And you're not that successful. You're not rich, you've been married 3 times, and I can't even tell people what you do—why can't you have a simple profession. It sounds to me like you just play the way you did when you were a kid? That's why you keep getting fired. Just like your father.



The three of them were up on the observation deck. It was cold but clear. The ship came around a point and started to enter a large, open bay. They saw houses and streets on either side of the bay, and they believed they had entered New York harbor, but they were still a dozen miles away. They had no diseases on board that the ship's physician could determine, so they were not required to station themselves at one of the quarantine positions.

Peter Kence watched my father and Kalyna Truss. They held hands; they pointed at the shore, at birds, and, it seemed to him, at each other. They included him in their discussions—for the most part. He would walk to the railing far from them just to be away from them and to watch them. My father was much taller than Kalyna Truss was, but they were not much different in age. Peter Kence couldn't understand why Kalyna Truss would prefer my father to himself. He felt more refined, closer to her class, and just as smart as my father. And more educated than him.

The captain came out and pointed to a narrow opening in the open bay.

Through there is New York, he said.

With their attention focused, they began to look for signs of New York. As they approached they thought that towns in Brooklyn and in New Jersey were actually New York. They couldn't imagine a Berlin-like city as New York. They had heard and read that America was new and rough, and they expected, at least partly, a rural village to be the largest city in America. Kalyna Truss knew better, but she enjoyed the childlike speculations of my father and Peter Kence. New York was not Paris, but it wasn't Kamenetz-Podilsky.

Through the narrows, they began to see the harbor open up. The captain again came out and pointed off to the righthand side of the ship, saying

In that direction. But over to the left and ahead of us you should see quite a remarkable sight. They stayed close to the righthand shore, and after a short time they saw what looked like a tall building ahead. An irregular building. They saw ships heading out of the harbor, and tried to track them back to where they started to find New York, but many of them came from New Jersey—but they didn't know that. A cold wind blew from ahead of them. They didn't know it was being funneled by two rivers that surrounded Manhattan. Kalyna Truss probably knew that; she kept quiet. She laughed at the two men and their comments. She smiled and hugged them both. She kissed my father. She laced her fingers in his. When no one was looking—she thought—she put his hand under her coat.

Then they began to see it clearly: A tall green statue of a woman with her arm in the air, holding a torch. The captain came out again and told them that it was called the Statue of Liberty and was a gift of France. Peter Kence was proud of that and made it known to everyone who could hear and understand him that his father was French and thank you very much.

When they finally could see around Governor's Island, they saw Manhattan. Skyscrapers—not like today or even like when my father died—but still more like a major European city than a village. Smoke blew out of Manhattan toward them, but it dispersed quickly in the swirling winds above them. They went past Ellis Island, which the captain explained was where the steerage passengers would go for immigration inspections, and they headed up the East River to a pier where they docked with the extreme assistance of a couple of tugboats.

The city rose above them. Its banks were brimming with activity. Horses, carts, some autos, buses, subways, elevated tracks, trains, boats large and small moving up and down river—up and down both rivers. The smells of



all kinds of foods being cooked. The familiar meats and fish along with spices and exotic smells. New York was a city of all kinds of people not just Europeans. On their own ship they had noticed Asians—mostly Chinese. Later it would be known that there were half a dozen stowaways in steerage and in the cargo sections of the ship, all but two Chinese.

When the ship was secure and the gangways lowered, Kalyna Truss turned to my father and kissed him long and passionately. She said

Pawlie, we are here. Tomorrow you will help me get to my brother's, won't you.

After a minute looking at the busy streets below he said Yes, of course. Peter Kence and will do that as I promised.

First class and second class passengers had the option to stay on board over night and make an early start, because even the casual inspections would take a few hours, and then it would be dark. They stayed one more night on the ship. The steerage passengers were transferred to ferries to Ellis Island, where their perilous journeys would truly begin, and most of them would spend the night there in barracks.

Welcome to America.



Oh we come around shore in a boat, come around so we can see ever thing and we see green statue Statue Liberty. Then Jesus Christ we see New York—big with tall buildings and with smoke all kind smoke blowing up and blowing away to a town to the east. Peter Kence he dance a dance on a deck and sing a song, raise his hands up and pretty soon he cryin. I hold onto rail so I don fall over. We make it America. Kalyna give me hug and I kiss her. Maybe kiss her goodbye I thinking.



Late; it was very late. My father stopped his story here. He was exhausted by the telling. He didn't tell me everything I told you. This is my story now as much as his. He hinted, he used Russian euphemisms, he said You know a lot. He needed me to have Kalyna Truss. He needed me to know that he was a complete person, a complete man, that he knew the world and knew its clear and bright corners as well as its dirty ones. As hard as it was for me to tell you those parts of the story, just imagine him telling them to me. Imagine you telling your daughter a story like that about yourself, knowing that you would die soon, maybe that very night.

Rest, he told me he needed to rest, and I did too. I went out into the corridor and then outside. The air was dropping dew but was still uncomfortably hot. I heard a woman crying out Help me, help me please. She cried the words. Before my father started the end of his story she would be dead. And when I left for home at dawn, I would see them wheeling her to the morgue to await the undertaker. Her obituary would be in the same paper as my father's.

## Traditional Salvation

Their first night in America was spent on board the *Pennsylvania*, docked on the East River side of Manhattan, with the city not 100 yards away from them. Many of the first-class passengers disembarked because they had booked hotel rooms and wanted to savor New York. Some of the second-class passengers also left, with family and friends nearby. Mostly it was the people who were immigrating who remained on board because they needed to make a good start on a long journey the next day—to relatives who had sent for them or friends who would help. Early trains, early boats and ferries. Manhattan was not the ideal place to leave for newcomers because its web of trains and subways and roads and ferries and boats was too complicated, and they were on an island—one couldn't just go immediately in the direction they needed to go.

Enough people had left that the chefs were able to serve everyone in one of the dining rooms, and the captain chose first class. Moreover, the chef was able to visit some nearby markets and brought back a variety of fresh meats and vegetables grown in greenhouses, and spices fresh in from the four winds. The ship took on fresh water, and all these things made for a meal better than any they had on the trip.

Peter Kence was worried about what my father would do: would he stay with Kalyna Truss, would he come with Peter Kence to his brother's, would he lose his mind and wander New York for the rest of his life? But he didn't want to press him, believing that pressure at the wrong time would cause my father to burst and choose an irrational path—better to let his passions cool down.

Kalyna Truss talked to my father about plans for the next morning.

I've arranged for my baggage to be delivered later in the day. I will have only a couple of large suitcases with me. My brother lives in a town called Astoria, which is to the north and will take less than 2 hours by carriage. We can leave early, so you could be back here by noon. When is your boat to Boston?

Peter Kence had told my father that they could take an overnight boat to Boston which would leave from the Hudson River side of Manhattan at 3pm and arrive mid afternoon the next day. He said it should be easy to get there on time if all went as planned with Kalyna Truss.

After supper, Kalyna Truss invited my father to her stateroom for tea and dessert. He got there around 9pm. When he entered she was sitting at her table in her harem pants outfit, there was a samovar beside her, and the table had some tarts and pastries like what she showed him in Hamburg.

I found a tearoom nearby and a European pastry shop. In New York, you can get anything you want from any part of the world.

My father sat down and she served tea. He ate a couple of the sweet desserts—he wasn't sure when he would have the luxury again. They were quiet. Outside the window New York was spread before them like a tapestry, the yellow lights, the apartments and offices lit late, gas lamps along the streets, people and carriages pressing along the streets, down the alleys. Carts with fish and meat, produce, corn potatoes, hay and straw; horses teamed and single pulling carriages and wagons, stands with people still selling their wares for the restaurants and businesses nearby, straw out on the sidewalks to keep them dry and safe from slip. Kalyna Truss looked out the window with him; she asked what he would photograph out there. He said

The people. The people who walk by so sadly but with a form purpose. Their dark clothes, their covering hats, the yellow lights making them all seem desperate.

I agree. This is the country that demands you take care of yourself. You must learn quickly no one is there to help you, except your family—who depend on you—and your friends who are the hook for their own welfare. No one will stoop to put out a hand if you slip. The straw is all you have and your own arms, legs, muscles, and mind. Of course they are desperate. Soon you will be too.

Although the scene changed all the time with different people, different configuration, different destinations, nothing changed, just the parts. Kalyna Truss turned and opened one of her cases. She brought out a sheaf of paper, a grand fountain pen, and a bottle of black ink. She laid out a sheet of paper, dipped the pen in the ink and began writing.

Kalyna Ivanova Truss  
704 Hauser Street  
Astoria, New York

For Pawlie Sanuk, my friend who rescued me from fear in my time of dire need. Never succumb to desperation. Never make the choice you will regret.

Then she signed it in an elaborate calligraphy. She pressed a felt against the sheet, folded it, put it in an envelop, and wrote his name of the front.

When you find your farm, please write to me and tell me where it is. This address will always work, she told him.

A faint yellow fog rolled in, slipping past the window, rubbing onto the window, fading the scene beyond, flaring the streetlights, blurring the reflections in the puddles on the street, painting grey the little streams coming down the gutters from sources unseen. They drank more tea and ate another tart.

After their dessert they went to the sofa, her pants whisking the air. She spoke first

Tomorrow we will not have a good opportunity to say goodbye properly. On this trip I met a person who taught me many things about loyalty, about the pleasures of a humble life, of courage, about tenderness and passion. I learned that one needed have an elite education to have talent, understanding, and insight. Our discussions about photography were discussions between equals—equals in aesthetics. You have the chance to become a great man, especially here in America. It's possible for you to go to school if you wish. Boston is the cultural center of America; New York isn't. You have a woman in your town who loves you and whom you love. You have dedicated yourself to her and you should remember that, keep it in the front of your mind. Every trip has stopovers, sidetracks, roads gone down that are not on the direct path; it's these diversions that give life texture. I am texture in your life. When we part tomorrow, please do your best to forget your longing for me. I am wrong for you because I'm like a storm wind that blows through a thick woods that swirls one way then the other, like the waves in the storm on this ship. That storm brought us close, but it's no way to live. I am destined to be alone, and I've known that all my life. Be at peace with yourself and who you are.

My father listened, and what she said struck him as true, but didn't fit his desire. He had hoped she would propose he stay with her, or better that she go with him. He knew the life he would want would be too soft for her, too boring. And he wondered whether he could learn to live her style of life—he had some much catching up to do. Over the past weeks he had grown to desire her like nothing he's desired so far. Even right then, he felt he needed to be in her bed with her. However, he said something like this

Never in my life did I imagine a woman like you could exist. Your talent, your knowledge, your grace, your beauty, your openness. It's been a privilege knowing you and helping you on your journey. I expect to never meet your match in this life.

He wanted to tell her he loved her, but he knew she didn't love him—or at least that's what he feared. And to say it—to her, out loud—would require her to answer, or to not, which would be the same as denying it. Better to leave some hope, better to give her the chance to find some place between love and indifference to feel toward him.

Then let's say goodbye like this, she said and leaned over and kissed him with her open mouth and the two of them repeated their castle day kiss, not in slow motion and not full speed, but with a lingering like the fog outside and the subduing ruckus. They touched each other lightly. And a while later, my father got up, and went back to his cabin.



Next morning, the steward woke them up at 6:30. They had a quick breakfast. My father and Peter Kence exchanged their currency with the steward for American dollars—the steward knew that my father was friendly with the captain, so he gave them the best exchange rate. They repacked their bundles, and made sure they had the money they needed. They went down to the gangway and out onto the pier. Up at the first-class gangway they saw Kalyna Truss with a satchel, two large suitcases, and a portfolio case. She waved to them. The sky

was clear but smudged with smoke, and they could smell garlic frying and coffee brewing. They made their way to Kalyna Truss, who greeted them politely and with only a hint of warmth. My father thought he saw some melancholy in her eyes, which were her 13-year-old eyes while the rest of her face was 27. A combination he had never seen. He smiled at her, but she turned and said

The carriage will be here momentarily. We should speak English from now on.

We've been speaking English only for a few days now, Peter Kence said. I'm certain he sounded funny.

Other passengers were starting to disembark, heading for friends, trains, hotels, ferries, and boats. Everywhere they looked was movement, bustle, busy arrangements, commerce, products, produce, and the gestures of a country clawing its destiny out of the hands of the weak. Kalyna Truss turned her attention to my father and Peter Kence, saying

My father may have sent someone ahead to waylay me here in New York. Or word might have reached here ahead of me that I am carrying valuables—the money my father gave me. You should look for anyone watching us too closely, or following us, or making any movements toward us. This satchel is particularly valuable, but also these suitcases. And I would prefer to not be taken back to my father.

My father and Peter Kence heard this soberly.

Captain Smith came to the railing above them, and called down to my father and Kalyna Truss

Goodbye my friends. May your lives together be fruitful and happy. And perhaps I'll see you on another ocean journey one day.

Goodbye, they all said at once. The carriage pulled up, and it was more like a wagon. Peter Kence and my father loaded the luggage. My father said to Kalyna Truss

What about your other things—you camera, your chemicals and equipment, your trunks?

They will be brought along later when the cargo is fully unloaded. I've arranged for a man to bring them in a freight wagon.

I was hoping to see some of your photographs. Do have any in your portfolio?

No, all that I have is with the other trunks. And I hope to build a portfolio of New York scenes.

They climbed up onto the carriage—it had two sets of benches, front and back. Peter Kence sat with the driver and my father with Kalyna Truss. She was dressed properly in solid black as if on her way to a funeral. She kept the satchel at her side between my father and her.

The carriage headed off the pier, then down South Street, west on Wall Street to Water Street. North from there the street changed names a few times, and at Hester they jogged over to Allen Street, which became First Avenue to the north. This took them through meat markets, fish markets, produce markets, past shops and small hotel and some small factories. Past restaurants and tenements. All possible smells came at them. The streets were noisy, and so they didn't speak much. Peter Kence and my father searched for any danger, chased off men who came too close to the carriage, watched when men were too close to the bed of the carriage where the luggage was—Kalyna Truss and their bundles.

Sometimes they would come upon a man or a few men playing music with a hat or bucket open in front of them, playing for tips. They heard music all along the way. The driver sometimes sang to himself or whistled. He said to Peter Kence

I know where Miss Truss is going, but what about you boys?

We leave Miss Truss Astoria. Then we go pier 54 on a boat to Boston.

I can take you back to First and Fourteenth, which will take you pretty close to pier 54. Not from around here?

We come from Ukraine.

Ukraine? Where's that?

Russia.

Ok, Russians. Rooskies. Just off the boat, are you?

The Pennsylvania.

Well, I wouldn't be so quick to leave Miss Truss behind, if you know what I mean. She a looker.

Looker? Yes, we lookin around pretty good see New York first time.

The man laughed. So did Kalyna Truss. She said, in Ukrainian, to my father and Peter Kence

Get used to it. American charm.

The streets were crowded and smelled of horse manure, much as the streets in Berlin had. Too many horses doing too much work. When they got near 59<sup>th</sup> Street, they jogged around some streets to get up onto the bridge. The driver said

Brand new bridge—Blackwell’s Island Bridge. They had some troubles building it, but it’s been open almost a year. Some of collapsed during a storm. Fifty people killed building it.

They looked up at it as they approached. A massive tangle of steel beams and struts, high towers capped by decorative crowns. None of them had seen anything like it before. They road high above the river, then over an island, and then into Queens. From the bridge they could see down the East River toward where the ship was docked, the skyline jagged and sooty, columns of smoke rising and blowing to the east and south. The wind was a cold wind, and Kalyna Truss had put on her gloves. My father wanted to hold her hands, but this was not the time for that—that time was past. They reached the other side of the bridge and turned onto 21<sup>st</sup> street going north. The area was more rural with plentiful trees, mostly oaks and elms with some older maples. The houses were only a few stories tall and spread out. Soon they got to a more thickly inhabited area and the carriage made a couple of turns, heading back toward the west, and then it stopped in front of a 2-story house, surrounded by a row of houses on either side. The driver said they were at the address Miss Truss had supplied.

They got off the carriage and started to unload the suitcases. Kalyna Truss said that this is where her brother lived, and began to thank the men for assisting her. A man came out the front door.

Hello, Kalyna, he said. He was shorter than my father, taller than Peter Kence, and older than either, maybe 25 or even 30 years old. He was Russian or Ukrainian, but spoke English with not much of an accent—what my father meant was that he sounded more like he was an American than a Russian. And he spoke in long, complex sentences compared to what my father had learned so far. Perhaps he was a friend of the family, and clearly he had been in America for a while. Kalyna Truss introduced him as Sergei. He seemed friendly, but watched my father and Peter Kence closely. He helped them move her suitcases into the foyer. One trip plus one extra for my father who brought her portfolio bag.

My father told me he was heading into the house with the portfolio when he heard the man say to Kalyna Truss in Russian

Do you have all the money?

She answered Yes, and as my father walked in he saw Kalyna Truss holding up the satchel. She smiled at him and said I’ll be out in a minute to say goodbye to you and Peter Kence. Sergei wants to get the suitcases up to my room because he has an appointment soon. I’ll be just a minute.

My father went back to the carriage. The driver said they would be back to First and Fourteenth before noon. Peter Kence checked to make sure their bundles were still in the carriage, and they were. He said

Is she gone? Did she say goodbye already?

No, she’ll be out in a minute. The man is leaving soon and is taking her bags upstairs.

They waited in the cold air, the wind blowing through the bare trees. It had snowed some time before, but the snow was dark with soot. They could hear trains blowing their whistles in the distance, and the sounds of boats sounding their horns. The town looked comfortable, but the houses were all made from wood, and they were mostly painted white or a cream color with grey or blue grey trim. My father was eager to see Kalyna Truss for one last time, to burn her face into his memory. A girl he would never forget. The first person to teach him remarkable things about life. Maybe he would tell her he loved her. That he would write to her, and maybe they could meet sometime. Boston was not that far away—just a day by train, he thought, if it’s a day by boat. He had seen trains and heard them. America seemed very efficient to him.

Peter Kence kept looking at him. Time was passing and they needed to head back to the city and pier 54.

I don’t know whether my father felt anxiety or he just let the time wash over him. When he told me this part



of the story, it was in a monotone with not much detail. Eventually the driver said

I need to get going—I have other jobs today. If you want to say goodbye, go in and say goodbye. My father went up the front stairs. The door was ajar just as he had left it. Hesitantly he pushed it open, slowly, and he saw that the suitcases were gone. He called out Kalyna! No answer. He called again. More curious, he pushed the door fully open and took a couple of steps inside and called for her again. Nothing. He called for Sergei. No answer. He was worried now that something had happened to her, to them. He went through the house room by room and there was no sign of them. The kitchen was in the back, with a back door. On the kitchen table he saw a note. It read

Sorry, Pawlie. I am fine. Goodbye. Kalyna.

They had left out the back door.

He went back to the carriage and told them that she said her goodbye to him and that they should just leave. Peter Kence could tell something was wrong. But my father didn't tell him she was gone, not about the note, not how they had taken everything and no one was in the house.

He asked the driver

Was this 704 Hauser Street?

No, Astoria Boulevard.

Did Miss Truss arrange for her other luggage to be delivered here?

Not that I know of. The luggage always must leave with the passenger.

With a snap of the reins the driver got the horses moving and turned the carriage around and they headed back over the bridge and into Manhattan.



I know my father was hurt by this. When he told me this part of the story, he could hardly keep back his tears, saying it was the pain from the operation acting up. He didn't talk much about the rest of the day, just enough of the facts that I could trace their journey. Betrayal was certainly part of it, but he could feel that not all of it was an evil plot or total exploitation.

Peter Kence was happy that my father was sitting behind him in the carriage. He talked animatedly to the driver about the city, about the country, about the future. The driver probably was laughing to himself at the locutions Peter Kence was using. These foreigners, he must have thought. But I'm sure the driver could sense the optimism and vitality of Peter Kence, the stout man with bright eyes, dressed like a gentleman farmer from a poor farming community. But neat. Not a crumpled coat or pants. Clean shoes, no mud. Clean fingernails. The other man—the quiet, sullen one in the back—was the worker of the two, but also clean and neat, but with calluses. And big—tall and muscular. Something had happened with that woman and this man, the driver must have thought. You could see the love in his eyes one the ride here, but all his life had been drained out. Not just from leaving her. Something else had happened; something in the house. But he kept quiet. He would perhaps write the story one day of his trip to Astoria. Make it a love story. He was an observant man, as writers must be. He saw these two men clearly—saw through them maybe. He liked them, but was glad he had his own life and not theirs.



The driver got them to First and Fourteenth just before 12:30. He told them

Head down this street. When you get to the water, go left, and you'll see pier 54. There will be a sign on it.

They didn't understand every word of it, but they did know to go to the water and turn left. They assumed they would be able to see what to do next or ask. Whatever the driver told them after Turn left, it was long and complicated. Kalyna Truss had take care of the costs of the trip already, so the driver wished them well and said goodbye. They took their bundles and headed down the busy street. My father was in no mood to talk—he was in shock over what had happened. He was agitated, which helped him walk quickly. Peter Kence thought it was because he had to leave Kalyna Truss and nothing else. He assumed my father would be able to get in touch with

her and maybe become involved again. Peter Kence didn't know the details and depth of the relationship that, in my father's mind, had been developed between Kalyna Truss and my father, but he knew how much time my father spent with her, he knew my father abandoned him during the storm to be with her, and he knew my father acted very differently after he met her. But for now he was happy that they were walking briskly.

This part of Manhattan was not as built up as it was closer to the Pennsylvania. But still there were store and shops and restaurants and delis and apartments everywhere with no break. It seemed at least as crowded as Berlin. Though they were hungry, Peter Kence insisted they wait until they at least had their tickets for the boat to Boston before looking for food. My father didn't need Peter Kence's insistence—he just wanted to walk.

My father looked around, though, just in case he might see Kalyna. Maybe this appointment required her and they needed to hurry up, and maybe that appointment were here in Manhattan. Or maybe the mystery man told her a magazine editor just had to see here that very afternoon, and they left. But why not come out the front and say something. It would have taken only a minute. And she spent the minute writing the note. Could it be that she was too upset to say goodbye—that it might have been too much for her, that she actually loved him and couldn't bear to part? Then why not profess her love? And who was this man? Sergei. It wasn't her brother, and he was never explained. She never mentioned anyone else in America that she knew other than her brother.

They kept hurrying. In less than 25 minutes they made it to the river. Looking downriver—to the left—they saw almost right in front of them a large building with what looked like a pier behind it. On the building they saw a 57, and Peter Kence puzzled out that they were not far from 54. Past pier 57 they saw the White Star pier, though they didn't know it. Keeping on, they saw a 54 and a boat was docked. Peter Kence squinted at the signs he saw and he saw some people lined up; they joined the line, and it was where they were selling tickets. There was only 1 price—no first class, second class, steerage—for this ship. It was \$10 each, and they quickly paid. The boat would leave at 3:15, and final boarding was 3pm. It was about 1:30.

Peter Kence spotted a bar across the street, and they saw it served simple bar food. They ordered pastrami sandwiches, two pickles, and a beer for Peter Kence. My father ordered a beer and a vodka. The bartender said they didn't have vodka, but they did have whiskey, and that's what my father got—a good Irish whiskey. He wasn't a drinker, then, but he had had drinks on the farm, and beers on the trip so far too. He knew from his father that hard drinks would put a fog between him and the real world. Peter Kence knew this meant that something had happened when they left Kalyna Truss in Astoria. Something that my father wanted to dull or forget. But he was sophisticated enough to know not to ask about it—my father would tell him when he was ready. Peter Kence knew what it was like to be badgered when he wasn't ready. His father, for one, and his mother, for another, both loved to do that.

My father ate half the sandwich, drank the whiskey in one gulp, then finished the sandwich. The beer was to quench his thirst when it was over. The pickle added an edge to the meal—a habit or taste he would never relinquish. Because he never drank, this small amount of alcohol did enough deadening that my father was satisfied. The memory of seeing the note on the kitchen table faded from the front of his attention, and soon the memory of Kalyna Truss's body in front of his eyes did too. Peter Kence kept track of the time, and they boarded at 2:30. And lucky for them they did. There were rooms with various numbers of bunks, ranging from 10 in the largest rooms down to 2 in small rooms. When they boarded, hardly anyone else was there, and Peter Kence, running quickly from room to room, found a small, 2 bed room—and it was not far from the toilets. They asked as best they could whether they could stay anywhere on the ship, and Peter Kence was sure it was the way it was handled. A steward came by, took their tickets, tore off part of each one, and placed them in holders outside the bedroom, and he told them there was a sitting area up on a higher deck, and also a dining room where supper would be served from 6 until 9pm. Sit; upstairs; supper; 6 & 9. This was about all they understood, but the circumstances filled in the rest. The steward gave them a key to their room, and they headed topside.

Topside. Your uncle was in the Navy, and I got that word from him. Connie was a black sheep, but he passed on a lot of stories—and some them make the story I just told you about my father and Kalyna Truss seem like a child's cartoon. Sesame Street stuff.

At 3:30 the boat left. They found a table in the dining area that had a good view of the Manhattan side of the boat. It was a much smaller boat than the Pennsylvania, and it moved slowly once the tugboats had freed it from the pier. Lots of other boats were going each way on the river. They soon saw Ellis Island ahead, and then the Statue of Liberty. My father started to imagine that they were returning to the Ukraine in shame and despair after their trip. What else could have gone wrong? Fred missing, probably dead; a man killed, at my father's hand; an immoral and unjustifiable sexual attachment with a young woman, disrespecting Olena and his mother and the church; a love affair turned into love and then cruel end to it. He felt that Kalyna Truss had used him somehow—that there was some plan she was executing, and that he was an unwilling and stupid part of it. She must be laughing, he was sure of it—with that man; her husband? Her lover? The brother who was supposed to be in the capital. And her father: Did he send her to America as she first said? Or did she leave? Was he alive or dead? Did she kill him? And take his money? Is that the money the man was asking about? And her career as a photographer? Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, could he be that stupid? That inexperienced? He turned toward Peter Kence and began to get ready to tell him the story, but the boat's whistle sounded, and they could see the failing light putting a pink glow on the city off to the left. The shipyards, the docks, the loading machines, the tall buildings—the apartment. All those lives in the end of day light. Kalyna Truss: she must be in a fancy bar right now, drinking to the farm boy almost too dumb to tell a sheep from a woman. Guess what I made him do, she might be asking her friends—the man. My father imagined his humiliation just beginning.

Later they ate. A buffet of some meats, chicken, duck, corn, peas, and potatoes. A bitter and drying coffee. A kind of custard for dessert. Because they were there early and stayed late, they ate two good portions and were filled. Peter Kence asked my father

How was the whiskey?

It helped me forget the difficult parts of our journey when I felt them pressing on me the most heavily.

There were difficulties. What should we do about Fred? Should I inform someone?

Who would be inform? Your cousin? All we know is that he started with us and he is not here now. We never saw him leave, never heard any altercation; we don't have a good reason to suspect something bad happened to him.

He left his bundle behind. And those men.

We are better off letting Fred take care of himself. Especially now. No one can pick up his trail after all this time. And the time to get the message to someone back in the Ukraine.

They sat and watched the lights of the coast as they moved toward the east. Peter Kence seemed not as worried about this boat trip as the last. We're near the coast, he would say—we could be rescued. And we survived the worst possible storm.

Later / late they went down to their cabin. My father asked

What's the name of this boat?

The Traditional Salvation.

Peculiar name.

Maybe a church owns it. I hear they are fond of the Roman Catholic church in Peabody, Mass. Or moving to another place is the traditional salvation for all that ails. It's why we left the Ukraine. It's why all those people on the Pennsylvania left their countries.

My father must have thought, That's why Kalyna Truss left me. Why now I must leave her. Why I left my family. Why I left Olena.

They washed up and locked the door to their cabin. They took off their clothes and got in their small beds. The mattress was just a thick cotton batting on a mesh of metal supported by springs. The blankets were a thin, coarse wool. The pillows had linen over them. They each had two blankets, and there was no heater in the room. Nowhere in the boat, it seemed to them. My father couldn't get his feet warm, so he put on his stockings. Later in the night he put on his coat. He replayed the day in his mind. He tried to find the exact moment when he could see the first hint of betrayal on Kalyna Truss's face, or in her manner or demeanor. But nothing. Nothing



came to mind. He was not deceived, he was sure, because of a blindness or his common stupidity. He was manipulated by a master. And perhaps to make the sleight of hand the most convincing, she had actually permitted herself—or willed herself—or, he hoped, couldn't help herself but feel in love with him. The better to snare him, but in truth it was a love. He had not gotten to where he could separate love from desire. He knew he felt desire, and his moral education told him that this was not possible without love. It wasn't the foolishness of the times that confused him on this—it's the foolishness of every time. Every generation. It's a form of hope. Of yearning for what could be better.



My father fell asleep. Peter Kence had stayed awake until then. As he lay there he wished—he prayed in fact—that my father forget Kalyna Truss. She was just a dream.

Then Peter Kence fell asleep.

While they slept the boat made its way toward Boston. There was no storm ahead. The seas were calm, and there was still some moonlight to light the way. They steamed not far off the coast—Peter Kence was sure he could swim it if he had to. The engines were noisy but not enough to keep them from a deep sleep. The Traditional Salvation passed many boats, some at rest for the night, others on their way to New York, some coming from Europe, from England. From Canada, from Scandinavia. People coming and going following their dreams, running from their nightmares. If my father had a golden dream of a life made exciting by Kalyna Truss, that dream turned foggy during the night, and his mind working on its own and hidden by sleep and its dreams, re-fixed its gaze on a farm somewhere near Peabody, a metal working job, a steady woman and wife giving him a family so he could prove to his father that he could survive on his own; thrive in a modest way, in a foreign, far away, and energetic and different land. Peter Kence was there to help him, and maybe Peter Kence's brother. There were other Ukrainians around Boston. They would help. With his hands he could earn money for a farm, and then he could send for Olena. He couldn't help it, but he imagined, right before he fell asleep, that that morning in Teremcy when he was on the train looking back at her house, that she woke after she heard the train's whistle as it left the village. She had been on her side under two or three heavy wool blankets and a goosedown comforter. She hurried to throw on her coat, and she ran out the door and toward the place where she could last see the train before it disappeared over the ridge onto the steppes. That she had seen the train, had seen a man turned and going back into a train car, and that she knew it was Pawlie, and she waved goodbye and said Never forget me. I will wait for you forever.

Olena began to push Kalyna Truss aside. Olena was real.



My father stopped the story and waved me away, waved me out of the room. I asked the nurse to go and look in on him, saying I thought he was in pain. There was a chair in the corridor, and I sat and looked at the floor, at the linoleum with a path worn down the middle. How much of this story did Nana know? Any of it? The two drunks at each other day and night—could either of them have been in this story?

I pictured Kalyna Truss and her man carrying the suitcases out the back door, loading them into a buggy, and the two of them riding away down a back alley away from my father. In my mind, though, as she drove away, was she laughing, or was she crying? Was she 13 or 27?

## Tip-cart to Peabody

Dawn—the Traditional Salvation was approaching Martha’s Vineyard; the sky would open up to a deep almost purple blue, the air cold with no breeze, not even a wisp of cloud. In the distance to the north a man with a good pair of binoculars could maybe see a smoke tail rising as homes were warmed and breakfast begun. My father had slept without waking, and he didn’t remember his dreams. The boat was ringing with the effort of the engines, and he could hear people stirring. Peter Kence still snored, and my father could see he had also put on his coat and maybe other clothes under the blankets.

Once Peter Kence was up, the boat trip went by quickly and easily. After a breakfast of cream of wheat and coffee, they sat in the dining deck and watched the fishing boats, commercial boats, and the bits of land they could see pass by slowly over the nearly glass-smooth water. Neither of them talked about the day before, or of the trip. Their conversation was limited to what they saw in front of them and their reactions to it. People came up—Russians, Ukrainians, others who could speak those languages—and introduced themselves, talked about where they were headed, what they hoped to do their, talked about their families, but almost as if by a hidden agreement, no one spoke of the past, how they got to be on the Traditional Salvation. Many who landed in New York had decided to venture to the west where there was less culture, less established communities and customs, more land, more freedom, fewer laws, not much government—the plains, the faraway new orchards, wheat fields, beef ranches—but the Traditional Salvation held those bound for the more established, more cultured original east of America. Boston, the Hub of the Universe some said, would be the center of many of the immigrant lives on the boat. Aside from the topics, my father must have felt that this was like the salon he dreamt of—the people coming to him, introducing themselves, bringing something but also familiar to the discussion. People pulled up chairs, brought coffee, spoke about the rivers they were seeking, the dairy farms, the carriage makers, the mountains, the fishing, even the arts, the symphony, the museum, the history of the region, the birth of America.

They passed Martha’s Vineyard, Nantucket, the arm of Cape Cod. Lunch was simple sandwiches, and my father said he talked them into giving him some pickles. Once past the tip of the Cape, the boat bent even more toward the west—they were in Massachusetts bay—and entering Boston Harbor, my father and Peter Kence were surprised to see what seemed to be dozens of islands; small boats passing by all the time. From the time they entered the Bay they could see land almost every direction. They were arriving.

The scale was small compared to New York, but more intimate, more like a village and less like a city. The boat entered a smaller inlet, the inner harbor it must have been, and with the assistance of two tugboats the Traditional Salvation docked in South Boston.

Peter Kence and my father disembarked and before they did they asked where the train station was—nearby, across a bridge, go left. It was midafternoon, and they weren’t sure how far it would be to Peabody, but they felt they could make it if things went well. They made it across a short bridge that would open for boats, and soon they saw the train station. They had, surprisingly, among their tickets, train tickets from Boston to Salem and then to Peabody. They showed them at the ticket window, and the man there shook his head no. He tried to explain, but they weren’t sure what he was saying

You want North Station. This is South Station. North, you want North.

Peter Kence said, How we get Nort Station?

The man said, take a buggy. See those people out there?

He pointed.

Go with them. North Station.

Peter Kence and my father saw the horses and buggies outside and people getting on them. They thanked the man and went outside. Peter Kence asked a couple

You goin Nort Station?

Yes.

Can we go with? Just arrive on a boat.

Ok.

They got on a buggy with the couple—it cost 2¢ each. It wasn't a long ride. They went through Chinatown, and my father and Peter Kence were surprised by some of the styles of windows on the restaurants there, but the style reminded them of some of the buildings in the Ukraine, especially the churches. They went down Congress Street through the heart of Boston, then past Haymarket with its hay strewn stalls with oysters, meat, poultry, and greenhouse grown vegetables; men calling out their goods, people with burlap bags carrying away their suppers.

Then they were at North Station. Peter Kence showed his tickets and the man pointed toward track 9 and said 4:25. The train would leave in about 15 minutes. Already outside it was getting dark, though the tops of buildings were still covered in a glowing light. Boston, like the other cities they had been in, was smoke filled, but it seemed less oppressive—a smaller city, maybe the smallest one so far aside from the larger towns near and in the Ukraine. The train arrived, and they got on board. The route took them through heavily settled areas first to Chelsea, then Lynn, then Swampscott, and finally Salem. They went over and next to waterways, over and under roads, behind backyards, past factories, through marshes, past and over rivers, through isolated areas, through the centers of towns, past farms, past apartments and tenements. They could see laundry hanging on lines in backyards, from lines between buildings, the clothes stiff from freezing. Darkness rose. They went through forests, past cemeteries—old ones by American standards, but still with headstones marked the 1600s.

By 5pm they were at the station in Salem. They crossed over the tracks to the other side and looked for a way to get to Peabody, less than 2 miles away. They could walk it, but in the dark they were afraid they would get lost. They saw a small truck, a delivery vehicle or for farming. It had an open bench in front, and a bed like a hay wagon with stakes and horizontal boards—to hold bales, for example. My father struggled to think of the word for it, and he finally called it a tip-cart, because the bed was on a hinge and you could release the front and tip the bed to unload. Wood delivery, maybe. They asked the man driving if he could give them a ride to Peabody, to Endicott Street, and he said Sure.

Peter Kence had an address, on Endicott Street. They climbed up into the bed and the headed for Peabody. The driver stopped at Endicott street; Out you go! he said to them. Peter Kence's brother lived only 5 minutes from there and my father watched Peter Kence and his brother, Philip, greeting each other with profuse gladness and joy. My father didn't know how long they had been separated, but no warmer welcome was imaginable.

Peter Kence introduced my father, who was also welcomed, and then he told his brother

Fred Burrowick didn't make it with us. He disappeared just after we crossed into Austro-Hungaria, right before we got on the train to Germany. We looked for him, but couldn't find him. We have his bundle still with us. We think he was captured by the Bolsheviks, maybe. Or the police.

Philip Kence was shocked to hear it. He never imagined the trip would be that dangerous, but when he had come over, it was a different time and the journey was simply long and tough, but not one you might not survive. He said

Fred—I will write a letter to his family.

No, Peter Kence said. We don't know enough to say anything bad happened. Let's wait. He might be right behind us. He still had his money—it wasn't in his bundle.

My father told me he decided not to say anything about being chased when they were out looking for Fred. They knew enough that it wasn't good.

Philip Kence said

We can have supper soon. My wife will cook for us, but we don't have room for Powell. There is a friend not far who has rooms; he's Ukrainian too, and less than half a mile away. We can go there while my wife prepares supper and arrange it. Then we all can come back.

Philip Kence got on his coat, called to his wife, Irina, who came to the door. He introduced his brother and my father to her, and told her what they were planning. She said of course she would cook—a good Ukrainian meal.

The walked down some train tracks until they came to Jacobs Street. They went to a house and a man named Eugene came out. The situation was explained, and he said that my father would stay at the rooming house for \$1 a week, but he could pay once he got work. Eugene was a close friend of Philip Kence. My father thanked him and put his bundle in his room, which was at the very top of the 3-story house. It looked like there were other boarders there. Eugene was Russian, but he Americanized his name.

Back at Philip Kence's they had a good Ukrainian meal. Peter Kence and my father told the story of their trip—toned down a little for Philip and Irina. Nothing about the chase. My father didn't talk about maybe killing one of the kidnapers, and he mentioned only that he helped escort a woman named Kalyna Truss to her brother's home in New York. Peter Kence talked about the storm, and also about his father and family. My father was able to sit and enjoy the fact that they were now at least settled enough that tomorrow they wouldn't need to get on a train or get in a buggy or take a train.

After supper, my father walked back to Eugene's house and he went to sleep. He was in America, and tomorrow or the day after, he would look for work.

My father looked for work for 3 weeks before he found anything. He went from factory to factory in the Peabody, Salem, and Lynn area. He found a small Jewish grocery store where the owner said he would sell my father soup, bread, and leftover cuts of meat for 12¢ a day, and my father could pay him once he found work. My father had thought that his skill with metal would have made finding work easy, but it hadn't.

At the end of the third week of looking, he found a job in a shoe factory cutting leather. The work was difficult—the factory was dark and filled with odors from tanning, and it was dusty and grimy. The work started at 6:30am every day, six days a week, and ended at 6pm. He had 30 minutes a day for lunch. This was worse than his life in Teremcy. He began to believe he had made a big mistake. His metalworking job back home was in a shop that opened to the clean air. He didn't need to work from before dawn until after dark. At \$8 a week and needing to live on that and eat, it would take a while save enough to buy a farm and for Olena to come to America. He was discouraged.

I work there two months. No work. I'm off the job. I'm home from look for work. I come in and lay down across the bed and I dream about this fella he come to give me work. Soon as I dreamed that, a fellow, somebody knock ona door and I woke up. And that same man I was dreaming says Come to work. So he come in he says two, two and a half days of work. I said all right and I went. I work there, oh, not quite four years. Sheet metal work.

That was the end of his journey. He started on a sled and ended on a tip-cart. He had ended his story but I asked him some questions. I asked how he met my mother.

He said he met her at the Russian Orthodox church in Salem. She was from Lachovcy, which is in the north—and now it's part of Belarus. They didn't speak the same language, but she could understand Ukrainian well enough, and my father could understand White Russian well enough that they could communicate, and the mistakes and misunderstandings were fun. They courted for about 6 months and were married. Your uncle and I were born while they still lived in Peabody.

My father said that on weekends sometimes they would visit nearby towns looking for farms that might be for sale to see what the land was like and what they would cost. He had heard about a farm in Merrimac that was for sale. It was our farm. It had an old barn an old house, some chicken coops, an apple and pear orchard, a pond, grapes, a cranberry bog, 5 good sized fields, two working wells, and woods with both pine and hardwoods. About 60 acres, but the roads weren't good—very muddy—and some of the land was swampy. Merrimac had thriving carriage businesses, and some companies that made sheet metal parts for automobiles. It was near a river. He liked the farm, but he was certain it was too costly with all the buildings. The price was about \$1700,

which was a lot more than they had been able to save.

After they saw the farm, they went to visit my mother's brother, Usten Zahoruiko, in Haverhill. They talked about my brother and me, and how things were going in Peabody with the metal working. Finally my father mentioned that they really liked the farm they saw in Merrimac—and they liked the small town atmosphere.

How much land, Usten Zahoruiko asked.

About 60 acres.

And you believe you can make a working farm out of it?

Yes, I do.

And how much are they asking?

About \$1700.

Sounds like a lot.

More than we can afford.

After a few minutes, Usten Zahoruiko said

Let's take a walk down to the coffee shop near the train station. There's something I want to talk to you about.

They walked down the steep hill and it really only took about 10 minutes. The house was on a hill that overlooked the Merrimack River. Quite a large house.

After getting 2 cups of coffee, they sat by the window looking at the shoe factories.

My sister was brought up in a wealthy house, as was I. She seems to have adapted well to America, and she tells me she's happy in her life with you and the two children. She tells me that you always talk about having a farm, and though she is not eager to be a farmer's wife, she understands that your happiness is part of her happiness. I've never asked about your trip to America, but I need to know this. Did you come on a ship from Hamburg named the Pennsylvania?

Yes, I did. How did you know.

I was in Boston the other week, and I ran into one of the children of a man I knew in Russia, and I heard about a man named Powell Sanuk who came over on that ship. There are many Sanuks now in this area—including that madman in Worcester who has your very name—and I wanted to find out if this was you being talked about. The person insisted on anonymity, and I promised. The man I know is a dignified and important man, and I'm certain that is true of his children as well. What I heard inclines me to help you in this matter with the farm. Even though you're family, this independent confirmation is important to me. My proposal then is to purchase this farm—my wife and I will. And over time as you can pay us back, you should do so. We will transfer the deed to you right away, and I trust you will take care of my sister and pay us back.

Thank you. Thanks. This is my dream. May I ask, what did you hear about the trip?

Only this: that you are an utterly dependable, reliable, and unselfish man.

Was the person you met a woman?

I won't say anything that would jeopardize anonymity.

I understand.

And so my father told me about my mother and him, but also I wondered, as he must have, did Usten meet Kalyna Truss? Did he know Ivan Truss, the tsar's lawyer? If the Zahoruikos were chefs to the tsar, it could be.

My father said he wrote to Kalyna Truss at the address she gave him, and never got any response, not even a return from the post office. He asked all the Russians and Ukrainians he ever met who had been in New York if they had ever heard the name. In the years since his death, I've tried to find her too. I would look in phone books wherever I went. I never saw her name anywhere.

The sky was beginning to get light, and I wanted to ask him a few more questions. I asked him how he was hurt, and he repeated the story I had heard from everyone: Nigger kicked him.

Why didn't he go to the hospital right away?

It didn't seem so bad, but it got worse.

Was he drinking when it happened?



He had been drinking the night before, but not the day of the accident.  
Did my mother have anything to do with the accident?  
No, why would she?  
Because she won't come here to see you.  
She is upset, and she was not well when you were away last week.  
Did you love Kalyna Truss?  
Love is a form of trust. She betrayed me. This is one reason I tell you never to completely trust anyone.  
He looked exhausted. I said  
I'll go now, but I'll be back later in the afternoon.  
Ok Helen. But remember what I said. You are too good a person; your heart is too big. Don't let anyone ever take advantage of you. Look after yourself first. You ask who I love. I love you.



When I left, the sun was just coming up. I drove slowly back to the farm. When I got there, Nana was cooking in the kitchen. Eggs and some kielbasa. She made coffee. Our stove burned coal and it smelled. She said  
I milk cows. After eat I feed chickens. I want go see Tatu today. I must tell him I am sorry.  
I need to sleep, and Tatu does too. We talked all night and he's tired. He is sleeping now. After I sleep we'll go.  
Ok, we do it you say when.  
As we ate I told her that my father had told me the story of his trip from the old country to America. And he gave me advice.

He tell you bout Kalyna Truss?  
He told you about her?  
Little bit. I think he make most of story.  
After I ate, I went to sleep. It was hard to sleep because of the heat and because of the story. And Nana, what about her? I had been taking care of the livestock alone since I got back. Now she wasn't drunk and helping. I was hopeful.



The phone woke me up. The operator talked to me before putting on the hospital. She said, Let me know how I can help.

They said my father died at noon. He was asleep, they said, and in no pain. I said I would make arrangements and that Nana and I would be by later.

I told Nana and she ran up to her bedroom crying. I called my Uncle Usten, and he said he would take care of all the arrangements. He called the undertakers near his house, S. D'Amico, and went to Linwood Cemetery in Haverhill and bought a modest plot just large enough for his sister and my father. Uncle Usten chose a simple metal casket and ordered a cement lining for the burial. He called back around 3pm and said the undertakers would prepare the body the next day. I told him we'd have the funeral at the farm.

I managed to get Nana to compose herself enough to go to the hospital. It was about 4 in the afternoon. And still hot.

## From the Late Home

The accident happened on July 7. I had been away since July 2 and returned July 9 by around noon. It was hot as hell when I got back. I visited my father and then that night the storm hit. About 7pm the wind shifted and the cool air was blown in from the ocean, and the temperature dropped 13 degrees in one hour. This brought a sharp electrical storm. Worse than any I've ever seen. The lightening was striking all around the house. I ran out to the barn and made sure the cows were firmly held by the slats in their stalls. The horses were panicked, and I tried to calm them, but I was scared to death. I ran back to the house just as the hail started. The hail was

the size of marbles. I had the car in the garage, but everything else was outside, including our handmade tractor. Nana came down from her bedroom and we sat in the middle of the living room, away from the windows. She smelled of alcohol. We had a painting of Jesus on the wall near the window close to the chimney. The lightning and thunder seemed simultaneous to me, and every minute of less.

One especially bright bolt seemed to struck the window, or maybe the chimney. The picture had been knocked off the wall, and the window frame was burning. Nana ran to get water and we put out the fire right away. Since that day I've been terrified of lightning storms.

I asked Nana again what happened to my father, and she said it was the horse. I asked had she been to see him, and she said the cows needed to be taken care of. She went back to her room. Before she did, she asked me to find a jar of moonshine for her.

She had been heavy as long as I knew her. She was almost a foot shorter than my father. After that she grew fat.



At the hospital, I asked about his death and the nurse said they really didn't know much about the actual passing because they discovered he had passed and not observed it. She said it was peritonitis, and it was likely he died while sleeping.

Nana went to the room he was in—he had been taken away already. She gathered his clothes and other things, and the towel I brought the ice chips in. While she was there, I asked the nurse, Were he have any other visitors?

Just your Uncle Zahoruiko and your brother Connie. There might have been a woman around 9 this morning. A well-dressed woman with a dark hat came up here. I asked if she needed help finding a patient, and she said she knew the room. I think she went into your father's room, but I'm not sure because I went in to check on him about 15 minutes later, and she wasn't there and he was asleep. Finally.

She paused, thinking. Then she said

You need to sign a couple of things.

I signed the routine-looking papers, but one of them had dates and times, and I saw he was operated on July 8 in the evening, and that he had been admitted only a few hours before.

Are these dates and times right? For July 8? I asked.

I'm not sure, but it doesn't really matter, does it?

No, I suppose not.



The next day we cooked. The Ukrainian custom. Nana and I made everything we could think of that my father liked. There would be guests at the funeral. My Aunt was cooking too, in Haverhill. We would eat here before the funeral, then we'd eat at Auntie's place after.

I practiced not trusting anyone. I didn't trust my mother. She had not acted normally, I thought. I was devastated and spent as much time as I could at the hospital, but she didn't visit him at all. And the records, why did it say he was admitted the day after the accident, and in the afternoon?

The next morning was the coldest ever on July 14 in New England. It was about 50 degrees when we got up to milk the cows, and it didn't warm up much during the day. It stayed cloudy all day.

A beautiful car brought my father. They set up the viewing stand in the living room. We had set up the plates of food in the kitchen. The undertaker came to me and asked when Nana and I would be ready for them to open the casket. I thought it would be best to get the shock over with long before people came, so I said right then would be a good time. We stood there; I held her hands. The undertaker looked at us, and when, I guess, he thought we looked ready, he opened it.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, Nana said, and she cried. She ran upstairs.

She'll be ok, I lied.

I was crying too.

Nana came back down about 30 minutes later, just as Auntie and Uncle Usten arrived. They comforted Nana, and then Auntie came and helped with the food. Sam and Anne Sherbon were next, then Connie, Maggie Wechezak, and Peter Kence and his wife. People ate and talked well of my father. They hugged Nana and me. They shook Connie's hand. Uncle Usten and Auntie took charge.

At 2pm John Letvenko conducted the funeral, singing part of it, speaking other parts. He had a chanter with him and incense filled the house. People cried. One by one we passed by the casket and said our goodbyes.

When the service was over, the undertaker asked us to step outside while he closed the casket for the last time. I asked for one last minute alone with my father.

When no one else was in the room, I talked to him. I said many things, but I ended like this

Tatu, I will do my best to do as you taught me. I love you so very, very much.

I kissed him. Then I said

I believe Kalyna Truss loved you too.

The undertaker closed the casket, called in the men, and they carried it out to the beautiful gray car. We followed in our cars. We drove down Hadley Road to Birch Meadow, then the road to Haverhill, past the Whittier's birthplace, past the lakes, and down to the cemetery. The men had dug the grave, and it had been lined with cement. The plot was in a newer, flat part of the cemetery, and the grave was at the edge of expansion. There were only newly planted trees, and all the headstones in this part were low. I looked around, and I saw the men back in the trees waiting with their shovels. I looked up at a small hill in the cemetery and thought Wouldn't that be a nice place for Tatu?

The men carried the casket to the grave, and Daniel Frederick conducted the final service.

We all cried. There were flowers all around the grave. Nana put a rose on the casket.

We got in our cars and drove to Uncle Usten's. I can only imagine the men lowering the casket and shoveling in the dirt, placing the sods of grass back on.

We ate and sang that night. Sam and Anne Scherbon milked the cows for us.



Richie, here is what the papers said that week.

—  
*Tuesday July 13, 1937*

*Deaths*

*Sanuk—At Amesbury hospital, July 12, Paul Alexander, aged 47 years. Funeral from the late home, 30 Hadley road, Merrimac, Wednesday afternoon at 2 o'clock. Burial in Linwood cemetery. Friends and relatives invited. Arrangements in charge of S. D'Amico. Tel. 1131.*

—  
*Tuesday, July 13, 1937, page 2, Merrimac section*

*Paul A Sanuk*

*Paul A. Sanuk, 30 Hadley road, died yesterday at the Amesbury hospital after a short illness at the age of about 47. He had undergone an operation four days ago. He was a native of Russia and had resided in Merrimac for 15 years, during that time being employed in farming. He leaves his wife, Mrs. Alexandra Sanuk, and two children, Helen and Cornelius Sanuk.*

*The funeral will be held tomorrow afternoon at 2 from the Hadley road home and burial will be in Linwood cemetery, Haverhill.*

—  
*Tuesday July 13, 1937*

*MISHAP RESULTS IN HIS DEATH*

*Pavel Sanuk Was Hit by Tongue of Hay Wagon*

*Amesbury—Pavel Sanuk, 48, of Hadley road, Merrimac, died at the Amesbury hospital yesterday afternoon, of injuries received while haying near his farm last Wednesday afternoon.*



Dr. William A. Flynn, associate medical examiner, who was called into the case, said that death resulted from general peritonitis following a rupture of the bowel. The medical examiner said that Sanuk was struck in the abdomen by the tongue of the hay-wagon.

According to reports in Merrimac, Sanuk was standing in front of the hay-wagon last Wednesday afternoon. The pair of horses started up unexpectedly and the tongue of the wagon hit the man in the abdomen. He was rushed to the Amesbury hospital.

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Thursday, July 15, 1937

Merrimac

Paul A. Sanuk

The funeral of Paul A. Sanuk, Hadley road, was held yesterday afternoon at 2 from the home. John Letvenko of Peabody conducted the funeral service.

Bearers were Peter Kence of Lynn; Samuel Scherbon, Merrimac; Conrad Rizya of Chelsea; Peter Kachuk, Bradford; John Letvenko, Peabody; and Wasil Niconchuk, also of Peabody. A service was conducted at the grave at Linwood cemetery, by Daniel Frederick of Haverhill.

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July 15, 1937

Dr. Flynn Declares Death Was Accidental

Amesbury—Dr. William A. Flynn, associate medical examiner here, reported today that an investigation has disclosed that injuries which brought about the death of Pavel Sanuk, Merrimac farmer, at the Amesbury hospital, last Monday, resulted from an accident.

An investigation of reports that Sanuk had been kicked by a person was made by Police Chief James B. Donahue and the reports were without foundation, it was stated. Sanuk, authorities said, was pushing a hay wagon into a barn about 2 weeks ago, when the shaft of the wagon hit him in the abdomen. A week later, he was struck by the tongue of the wagon in the same place. The cause of death was given as general peritonitis, following intestinal injuries.

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July 17, 1937

Paul A. Sanuk

Floral tributes at the funeral of Paul A. Sanuk were: Pillow, "Husband," Mrs. Alexandria Sanuk; standing wreath, son and daughter, Paul and Concerta Sanuk; standing wreath, daughters, Helen and Pauline Sanuk; standing wreath, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Kence, Lynn; standing wreath, Mr. and Mrs. Wasil Niconchuk, Peabody; standing wreath, I. W. O. Branch 3097, Haverhill; basket, Century Wood Heel Co., Haverhill; wreath, lillies and roses, I. W. O. Branch 3032, Peabody; spray, "Godfather," Henry Stepchin, Peabody; spray, Mr. and Mrs. Larry Zaharchuk, Haverhill; standing wreath, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Scherbon; standing wreath, neighbors of Merrimac and Newton, N. H.; spray, Mr. and Mrs. Ignatius Robchinuk and Mr. and Mrs. Nester Pawlyk, Salem; broken circle, Mr. and Mrs. Philip Levchuk and John Litvenko, Peabody; gladioli, Unity Shoe Co. stitching room, Haverhill; spray, Mr. and Mrs. Basil Livcovich, Haverhill; wreath, Mrs. Maggie Wechezak and family, Newton, N. H.; spray, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Hutchinson, Deerfield, N. H.; spray, Star Milk Co., Haverhill; and wreath, "Godfather," Annie Rizza, Chelsea.

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Paul and Concerta Sanuk was really my brother, Connie—Connie Paul Sanuk; no one can accept his first name. And Helen and Pauline Sanuk was me—Helen Pauline Sanuk.

That's the story, Richie. The story of my father's trip—the story he told me right before he died. Maybe it was the last thing he ever said to anyone. He told it to me and then died right away. I had to get the funeral arrangements done with my Aunt and Uncle's help, and I had to keep my mother from falling apart. And there was the farm, too. Our first hay harvest was coming up, and gardens needed tending, and there were blueberries to pick. It was a while before I could try to make sense of the story. Of course, he didn't tell me all those details—he was not good with English, and my Ukrainian was best for farm and house talk.

With all the work on the farm and the factory work, I had hardly any free time to think about the story, but I did think about it during the boredom of the work, and I'm afraid the story as I fleshed it out in my head reflected that boredom and maybe some of the hopes I had for the future, and maybe romantic ideas of who my father had been. But when you hear a story, you can't help but fill it in. There was a real journey my father took, and the words he told me were just a hint of that real journey. A person has to fill it in, explain the gaps and mysteries the skeletal words tell you.

I've filled in most of the story with what I knew of him and Nana. I used stories I had heard from others who made the trip—Sam Scherbon, Philip Levchuk. I used stories I heard of his farm in the old country, of Sam's farm there. My father was a man of hidden passion, and I used that. He was a man possessed by melancholy at what could be, and I used that. And I used my heart when everything else failed.

The next years were the hardest of my life. The work was oppressive. There was no money. We lived through the kindness of our neighbors and Uncle Usten and Auntie. We had to slaughter livestock for money and food. We weren't able to keep the buildings up, and the old house collapsed. Year after year it was beyond terrible. Then the war and all the shortages. Nothing seemed to go right for us. And all I had was Nana, who kept drinking to try to forget. She tried to help, but she got fat from the bad food we had to eat and just couldn't do some things.

Connie came home for Christmas in 1944—he was in the Seabees. We had a new oil stove in place of the coal stove. Nana was cooking our Christmas supper, and we decided to deliver some presents to the Wechezaks before eating. We were gone only about 15 or 20 minutes—they were just up the road. When we got back, there was smoke coming out of the house. When we opened the back door, the house broke into flames. The oil range had exploded or something. We ran across the road to the Scherbons and called the fire department. It took them about 20 minutes to get there. It was the coldest day of the winter—maybe that's why it took so long. We tried to get some things out of the house—pictures, papers at least, but the smoke was too much.

The firemen laid a hose down to the pond, but they could only save the barn and garage. I told a fireman I knew that my cat was in the house and could he please save her. He said he would. I watched, but he never tried. He said the flames were too intense, but my poor cat died in there. This reinforced for me what my father had said. Never trust anyone. The men who chased him and Peter Kence in Hungary were police or in the military or something like that, and they took Fred.

The newspaper didn't report that my cat had died. They reported that Connie lost his uniform. The headline was Seabee's Home Coming At Merrimac Tragic. What about us?

We had to stay with the Scherbons until we had a new house. The man who built it promised to build a house just like the one we had, but he didn't. He and his men built what they wanted—it was just like the house the Haddads had up the street. We stayed in the Scherbon's garage until the new one was tar-papered and we could move in even with just the raw floors and not all the inside walls even covered. We froze.

But through all this I kept the story. I never told it to Nana—she knew only whatever story he chose to tell her. I used the story to keep going. We had our good times, not many, but some.

Now it's your turn, Richard. I've made this story mine, make it yours. You've heard the lessons he tried to teach me; do they work for you? Find Powell Sanuk and live his story in your imagination.

## And I Made This Story

This is Richard P. Gabriel, and I wrote this novel. It's the story of my mother telling me the story of her experience of her father's death. The heart of that experience was the advice he gave her right before he died about how to live. My mother lived her life essentially friendless, relying on her husband and me for companions. Her temper was sharp and her critical tongue quick. Our neighbors told me, after she died, that they could hear her yelling at my grandmother, my father, and me any time of the day or night. I recall in the years leading up to my father's death, she would humiliate him by criticizing his every action. Her favorite activity was to direct him washing the dishes—which dish to wash next, where to put it in the strainer. I told my friends she treated him like a human robot. At that time her leg injury from her youth had become arthritic enough that she couldn't do much around the house.

There are no end of things I could tell you about to illustrate her style and approach to life. One would be when she said

I knew it would someone like her. If you ever marry her, don't tell me, and if you ever have children, I never want to know.

This when I had been dating a Japanese-American woman who later became the mother of my daughter. My mother and I were estranged for 8 years over this remark. I suppose this tells you something about me, too.

I'm an only child, and the relatives are sparse.

My mother told me the story of her father dying several times, especially on out twice-a-year trips between New England and Florida after my father died so she didn't need to live in excessive heat or cold. In her story, he was kicked by one of their horses, he went to the hospital, and died a few days later. She was called to his bedside where he told her that he was not going to be able to take care of her anymore, and that he was afraid that she was so good-hearted, so special that people would always be trying to take advantage of her. He told her to be careful and not allow people to use her. He died later that night.

This was all I knew about the story of his actual death. There were mysteries about her I found out after she died a few years after my father. One was that she had lied about her age by 8 years—that she was 8 years younger than she had told everyone, including my father. As she told her granddaughter after we had reconciled, Every woman has her secrets.

When I went to the Haverhill Public Library to read my grandfather's obituary, I found all the articles quoted at the end of the last chapter. The one about the accident being investigated as a homicide was especially attention grabbing. Who could it have been? I knew my grandfather and grandmother were moonshiners during prohibition, and perhaps it was some business enemy, so dispute. Or an old adversary. As I investigated more, I located a man who said he knew a lot about my family back then—the town historian, Jeff. His knowledge was second hand, mostly through his father who had many business dealings with our farm.

The day I happened upon him—in Merrimac—I spent 4 hours talking to him about my family and what I knew about them under his intense questioning. It felt like a psychological evaluation, and in a way it was—he was testing whether I was prepared to accept the facts of my grandfather's death. Then he revealed it.

My grandparents had been drinking and were drunk the day the incident happened, July 7, 1937. No one was sure why they were fighting, but it was not unusual. They were outside the house, between the house and garage when my grandmother started kicking him and ruptured his bowels and perhaps his bladder. She was literally half his size. Jeff said he could not urinate though he had an insistent urge to. This seemed to be important to his story. Then he told me the hard part

He lay there for a long time out between the house and garage, moaning in pain. He lay there for maybe two days before they took him to the hospital.

Jeff probably thought I wouldn't be able to believe the story. He offered to arrange a meeting between Billy Scherbon and me sometime in the next couple of days. Billy was Sam Scherbon's son, and someone I had known well when I still lived in Merrimac. Jeff said it would take some convincing for Billy to tell me what he knew.

Because, Jeff said, all the neighbors and others in Merrimac had agreed to never tell me the truth about the story. It was a town secret to be withheld from me. Perhaps they believed I was not able to hear the truth and remain sane.

Jeff told me that if he could arrange the meeting, my job was to convince them with the things I said that I would be able to hear the story and not fall apart. None of our farm neighbors had seen nor heard of me for over 25 years. We met at Billy's son's company in Amesbury. I brought pictures of my parents, and I told Billy and his wife about what happened to my parents and to me in the intervening years. I told them about where and how they lived, how and when they died, about my career and life and children. I tried to sound sane.

Jeff urged Billy to tell me the story, and he did.

Your grandparents were drunk and fighting. I was 6 years old at the time, and your grandfather, Pawlie, was my godfather. Your grandmother kicked him. I heard them fighting, and then I heard Pawlie screaming. I went over and saw him on the ground. Your grandmother had kicked him in the plumbing, and he had to pee but he couldn't. He lay there like that for a long time, at least over night. Then they took him to the hospital. We all agreed to never tell you this. What good would it do?

Billy's father, Sam Scherbon, and my grandfather were from the same town in the Ukraine, and my grandfather lent Sam money to buy the farm right across the street. There was a connection between the families. Billy went on

Your mother worked like hell after he died. She was in the factory all day and the cows and chickens and all that early in the morning and at night. They planted the hay and cut it down, hauled it into the barn, did all the work your grandfather used to do, and he was a big man—as tall as you. And I heard them yelling at each other every day, like two wildcats fighting, your mother and her mother. You mother worked like that for 8 years until she met your father and he rescued her.

Over the years after that I would run into people who knew the story, and it was always the same one. Especially the part about swearing to never tell me the story.

Did they think I was too frail to hear it? I was born with crossed eyes, and back then such a defect might have been considered evidence of a feeble mind and weak constitution. And they did have a point.

I remember for weeks after hearing the story the first time thinking about what it meant to have a close relative who was a killer—one could even say a murderer. I remember my mother and grandmother yelling at each other just about every day while I was growing up—in Ukrainian or Russian, I was never sure which, but I think it was mostly Ukrainian. One of the people I met one day after a hail storm a lot like the one in the story said that one of the problems between my grandparents was that they didn't speak exactly the same language. And I remember my mother telling about some of the differences between Ukrainian and White Russian, but never in any but an abstract context.

And I remember taking all the things I knew about my mother and her mother and the farm, and reinterpreting it in light of the revealed truth. Did my mother know about the killing, or did she believe it to be an accident? If she were home when it happened, what did she do while her father lay there for a long time, maybe two days writhing in pain, crying and screaming? Was she away? Did she eventually take him to the hospital herself? What about the neighbors on nearby farms—why didn't they help? A theory I heard was that people didn't interfere in the relations between a husband and wife.



But the more I dug, the less I found. To understand my grandfather and the dynamic between him and his wife and my mother, I needed to write this story. I couldn't leave him as one picture and the story of his death. He made my mother who she is, and she made me who I am.

Remember the little hill in the cemetery where my grandfather is buried? That's where my mother bought the grave where she and my father are buried. I remember the day she bought it we were standing there on it and she said

This way I can always look down at my parents.

And she pointed.



And the heart of the story of my mother at her father's hospital bed is the story of his journey from his town in the Ukraine to New England. This was his transition from his dreams and hopes to his lived life. It made him who he was.

I couldn't leave him as one picture and the story of his death. He made my mother who she is, and she made me who I am. And I made this story.

Before I end, though, there's one last scene I know you want to read. Here's the secret: The story you remember is the one that gets the closest to sentimentality but goes unnoticed by the critics.



Spring, 1940. What a Spring. What a Spring day. Sun in a clear, refreshing blue sky. Robins just arriving and pulling at worms, the grass just turned green—new growth. The beech tree is just a bit taller, and more headstones have been added to the flat expanse of cemetery. One of the new ones says

SANUK

Father  
Powell A.  
1888 1937

Mother  
Alexandra T.

From Mill Street a great, green convertible enters, its top down, its seats white leather. A woman is driving; alone; she's got a turquoise scarf on her head. She drives past the old headstones—the ones from the 1700s, the 1800s, the ones with crosses on top, with small statues, the ones with skulls etched in slate. She drives to the new section, scattering the winter-thinned woodchucks and cantankerous squirrels. She steps out and the sun catches her silk harem pants, forest green with blue and pink flowers; she throws her scarf in the backseat, shakes her head and her shoulder-length hair unfolds and the highlights catch the sun. She has a cobalt blue blouse and black, elbow-length gloves. One streak of white emerges from her temple, and the rest of her hair is dark black, almost blue but when light strikes it the highlights are red.

Without searching, she walks directly to the grave, past it, and turns to look. She smiles and laughs for a second.

Pawlie, are you still at your beauty treatment? I'm waiting for you.

She bends at the knees and places a sprig of fresh lilac, just bloomed from the bush beside his barn. She saw two women in the field plowing, one driving a tractor, the other behind on the plow seat. But they were at work and never saw her.

I'll wait forever.

She takes off the glove from her right hand, kisses two fingers, and places them on the top of the stone.

The convertible horn honks as it crosses the river. The turquoise scarf flies out behind her.

## After A Lot of Prose

the long form  
makes more sense for speculation  
and hoping  
and even the small swings at poetry  
fit in the cracks like old mortar  
that will certainly dry out  
and fall out  
leaving the bricks to tumble  
when the critics quake

## Cantankerous Woodchucks

she's only in here  
her pants are famous  
of the 4 stories you might know  
which do you guess  
she bounds in  
winks laughs  
bounds out  
extra if you guess the bridge  
but you know her  
she knows everything  
your job is guess



## Ploughman Take My Earth

possibly a good day  
a story worth hearing  
under the frost the grass remains green  
lilacs stolen while women worked  
in the fields / heavy work and even more sweat  
though Spring is nearly everywhere  
it's not here / not here nearly  
but near



## A Hundred Miles

when I'm alone  
I dream that I'm dreaming  
the car moves forward  
I make it go as it might  
the roads repeat  
songs repeat  
stories repeat  
if they knew what I make of their stories  
they would say  
forget them  
forget us  
be someone else

## Just What You'd Expect

never fails  
always fails

## **Past the Truth**

maybe you wonder what it means  
who is the storyteller and who listens  
where the facts get factored out  
and previous truth is shoved aside  
the past I talk about is 100 years ago  
and it's a b&w photo turning brown

## Thoroughly Gone

you know you look  
at a woman who face is blank  
from the realization of love  
and you think how human  
how alive how miraculous  
and then you remember  
she's gone / I mean  
she's dead / long dead  
and there is nothing like that  
for her anymore  
O it makes you cry  
doesn't it

## Missing Sound

without reverb  
the guitar is a metallic plink  
the music waits back behind a curtain  
I'm certain song is pretty  
but it's just an itch  
just a scratch on a metal wire  
sing to me  
sing me to sleep  
drive away when I'm gone  
drive away without one sound  
let your departure be the reverb  
in our song

## Undoing

behind the walls  
under the beds  
what we wish for falls away  
the woman who makes it possible  
drives away and takes with her  
a glimmering laugh

## A Visit

when she drives under the gate  
a woodchuck scrambles up a small hill  
and then under a granite step into his nest  
likewise squirrels bound away because  
her car's not silent / and why should it be  
it's 1940 and it's a warm spring day  
stones strangely thin and tall stand up  
over the hills in the fields she drives through  
three turns later she stops the car pulling over  
onto the grass steps out / walks into the field  
past a stone / turns / looks back / it's where  
she's intending / she remarks a funny remark  
places a lilac on it / laughs / drives on  
to a bridge / over it / she honks the horn  
at a couple below kissing on the ground  
all the wildlife scrambles away / birds fly up  
and away / wind swirls in her wake

## Future Proof

why it all breaks  
submerged and dejected  
words are all we can have  
the words you use  
tell me your job  
what you deserve  
much is made of the creatures  
descended from heaven



## **Ship Born**

the simple romance  
was left behind  
on a ship that tossed for days  
alone with a scarred woman  
in her bed all through the storm  
making life life

## On & On

even though he made the journey  
from cold & wooded farmland  
to a colder samelike place  
other journey's could have been and have been  
he heard the radio and from the distance  
the air popped the electricity making the sounds  
proving the equation primitive=lone  
I walked the same fields as he did  
I walked others and farther  
I am carrying him on

## Wrong Day to Bloom

the bloom came  
and all the inside parts designed  
to attract the bees and flies  
and spread the pollen and make more  
but no flies would fly by nor bee buzz  
its way in because the bloom was at the start  
or winter and all those helpers were tucked  
away till spring / you might wonder  
what was that iris thinking?

## **Color of Truthlessness**

her gaze is like a lie  
she's reclined like the queen  
her eyes are pale green  
she is her heart's spy

## Sanuk Haying

longing for her he went about his haying  
every time the horses stopped his heart  
did / the grasshoppers continued to jump  
he remembered her just shaking in the morning  
under the blankets / she was doing things  
he could sense it / in the barn smells  
weren't hers / in the house smells of cooking  
his wife cooking for his last load  
later that week she would kill him

## Which Game

on the other side of a deep mist  
near waves that barely splash  
many of the cheerleaders are wondering  
how many children they'll have  
which home they will buy  
which cars / which boats  
on this side the quarterback  
takes his 7 step drop

## Expectedness

the birds scrapping through leaves  
looking for grubs and worms  
for seeds and the dander of life  
they're brown like the leaves  
brown and darker  
the leaves are brown and darker  
light is fading in the almost winter afternoon  
sky's lightly clouded but it feels like rain  
in the future / I walk past and the birds  
hope away

## Justice, O Justice

oh what fun to josh the dopes  
they are what our democracy  
counts as the of the people  
we base our justice on their ideas



## Furious Ending

under sheltering pines  
snow piles slowly  
above snow falls like late age  
clouds coming apart fast  
it's cold enough that you think  
it happens slowly but it's  
happening as fast as it  
can and those pines won't last  
much longer

## Fleeing

there was no door  
and I turned back  
and there was no door  
just a man / just a bottle  
only the jasmine desire  
broken apart when the lovers parted  
when the doors disappeared

## Near Night in Boston

the porcelain sky near twilight  
dusting the blue that guided us all day  
we are invited to kiss  
and were it summer there would be the smells  
of flowers rising up around us and grass just cut  
this afternoon around us and we would kiss  
ignoring each other's shining scars  
but this is a winter sky and clear  
we are wrapped in warm coats  
and our skin is cold yet we kiss  
anyhow because the river before us seems still  
and something in the sky has called to us  
its nighttime invitation

## Wedding Day

once I knelt in a chapel  
once I said some words  
once we exchanged rings  
my father played the organ poorly  
a young man read a poem badly  
we ate in an Irish house  
we spent the snowing night  
in an old inn in a historic town  
she spread herself out  
and the next day we toured the village  
people cried then  
they still cry

## Kalyna Truss Almost Visits

driving up 1 she entered Newburyport  
then turned west toward Merrimac  
the roads weren't yet paved I hear  
so she must have bumped up rutted hills  
and down rocky hills and the trees  
alongside were brown from the dust of it all  
she passed fields where farmers were still ploughing  
and though she never looked hard at them she knew  
they sweated and would be ashamed of their shirts  
were she to stop and see them / she would have been  
their dreams from that moment on scar and all  
in Merrimac she turned northwest and then up a hill  
then south to the farm where she stopped  
he was in the field / ploughing behind the horses  
she never stepped out of the car top down  
she watched his hard back working  
his arms pumping the horses through their reins  
she saw near the barn a woman hanging laundry  
she thought this is the one he settled for  
she drove back the way she came  
but she vowed to remember the lilac bush  
but the clothesline and how it must smell  
in the mornings

## All These

the bridge fleeing one side for the other  
the water reflecting another blue  
the road whipping under wheels  
the trees bleeding leaves to the ground  
the silent stealing of a sprig of lilacs  
the gates opening into the spill of endings  
the groundhogs and squirrels returning to chaos after a calm  
the auto stopping two wheels in grass and two in dirt  
the dress dripping with femininity and the black veil pulled down  
the gloved hand dropping the lilac like a forgotten moment  
the stone receiving the lilac like a forgotten moment  
the soul believing she owes this one thing to the underground man  
the universe retreating behind this moment

## Tiptoeing

when two possibilities conflict  
the foreign sky intervenes  
the cold turning autumn to winter intercedes  
the one based on courage turns and walks off

## Not Clear

oh it turns out my nose is stuffed  
and up the street lanterns are covered  
over by the mist or fog and near the ocean  
a wind from off the water blows salt spray  
over the road and onto the windows of a lucky man's house  
luck / not so lucky / stuffed up / mist and fog and spray  
all the ingredients that makes the 21<sup>st</sup> century  
something to worry about



## Snowy Day and a Train

she heard the train whistle  
she thought  
she woke up believing the whistle woke her  
but the air in her room was cold  
she was under blankets and goosedown and warm  
she was warm but it seemed like she should get up  
but she couldn't remember why  
she turned over and fell back asleep

## Sleepy Time Time

trips are unsettled  
we are unfinished until the last moment  
sometimes the urge to sleep is itself a blanket on the soul  
my feet feel cold and finding a way to loosen my back  
takes half the night / yet sleep is like a rainfall  
with sudden gusts of stillness the secret  
to a good soaking

## **Her Scar**

her scar under her hair  
her eyes scanning the room  
over her head the ceiling is patterned  
this is where I gaze  
her breathing is slowing

## Lost and Forgotten but Quick

when she's been gone for years  
all's left are what impressionists would see  
reflected light / memory with but one bit  
of information / the part of him that simulates her  
struggles to add back information / emotions  
but the channels are clogged / it's as if no  
one has any free hands any more