

Poetry Porch: Poetry

From MOONRISE OVER PENOBSCOT BAY

By Richard Dey

The Plane Descending

The Hamper

In the Course of the Fall

Too Bad We Just Can't Stay

Meet Me in St. Louis

Seventy-Years Young

He Would, in Time, See All Too Well

Moonrise over Penobscot Bay

The Plane Descending

*The fifth night we passed St. Louis,
and it was like the whole world lit up.*

—Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

It was uncertain to begin with, this trip.
Anxious now in the narrow aisle seat,
I'd flown in my condition but not alone,
and there were issues with my new wheelchair.

I'd rationed apple slices, a Power Bar,
managed a single trip to the bathroom;
and if I could do this, then why not meet
in Lauderdale & winter in Key West?

Seats upright, seatbelts fastened. The plane
descending through dark clouds & turbulence,
shuddering as if to wake you up.

Out the window an array of lights new
to me as her four-poster. Would I not
adjust, be welcome?

What had brought him there?

The Hamper

Beneath the two-fold handles
& double lids
set down beside the water
between us, unhampered at last

beneath the champagne & two flutes
partitioned by china,
the quiche & baguette
inside the linens & flatware

beneath the Camembert & fruit
& two Everyman editions
just in case we find ourselves
at a loss for words

lies the hunger
savage, bottomless

In the Course of the Fall

In the course of the fall
that took less time than a furtive kiss,
a fall I took to the deck,
landing on my already injured spine,
I saw the miles that stretch
between us like rope, and each of us
trapped at its bitter ends.

In the course of the fall
I saw the time left us
was little enough to begin with,
that unlike that of the young,
large-lunged & carefree,
ours was a kiss running short of breath,
pink flesh against

the curve of the carbon-fiber blade.
In the course of the fall
that took less time than a furtive kiss,
I willed this poem, my only way
to bridge what stretches between us,
this wanting & the smile
on your uplifted face.

Too Bad We Just Can't Stay

another day, in this room
with its view over the sparkling calm
of Clam Cove defined by peninsulas,
their fir tops downward sloping
to the granite shore like arms.

Too bad we just can't stay
in this room with its distant view
over & above the cove's calm
of boats crossing the sparkling bay
and, in the foreground, across
the porch rail, a meadow's wild wealth.

Too bad we just can't stay
another day, in this room where
heard in the fir trees sighing outside,
seen in the cat's-paws on the sparkle
on which a sloop pulls at its mooring,
felt is the breeze just making-up.

Meet Me in St. Louis

You were so thoughtful
renting the ramps
for the new electric travel wheelchair
I'd bought to make the trip possible
so thoughtful putting in a bathroom grab bar
laying in coffee, muffins, bourbon
(How well she knew him!)

arranging dinners with select friends
(a scientist, two writers!)

driving me to the river where
I could imagine riverboats, rafts,
see it as "a strong brown god—
sullen, untamed, and intractable"

showing me Forest Park, the art museum,
the Chase Park Plaza—
all your favorite places

and then, the ambush set, so thoughtful,
to detonate the IED:
"I never thought you'd come here"
meaning *This was never what I wanted*

(No wonder she no longer wanted
silver bangles or black lace underwear!)

I can take it, of course I can, he said
in retreat, in the rain

*What's a little misunderstanding
between old friends?*

Flying back East I've seen how
"entrenched" you are

Arriving home
in the pouring rain,
he remembered the fake fireplace & how
no glow of gas-lit logs could warm
her row house, that high-ceilinged tomb.

Seventy-Years Young

He could not keep its name in mind. What kind
of name, and where, was that—*French Lick*? What place
to celebrate her seventieth birthday?

This was more than a year before his trip
to see her in the former river port,
back when the sailing was smooth—or seemed that way.

It was, in this story, the turning point—
the real one, though at the time, unacknowledged.
They'd celebrated his not six months before,

along the coast—she'd seen to that. But hers?
She loved him in her way but there was no
way she was going to push him in his chair

and not do everything there was to do
at the resort—tennis, hiking, golf,
swimming, blackjack—and *not* be seventy,

even if it was, as the kids say, “pretend.”
She'd reserved her room, and not only that
but rooms for everyone, and gone alone,

the righteous widow, mother, grandmother
who knew then, partly at least, he'd never be
a part of her family, her next partner.

He Would, in Time, See All Too Well

She was a window on the world,
he would, in time, see all too well,
reason for tickets, reservations,

someone with whom sharing things
that made him, Benjamin Crane, feel wired
to someone else, another's wings.

She flew Ben out into that world.
She made him forget his injury—
its slow decline, without a cure.

It was because he needed what
she gave him, and loved her for it, that he
allowed himself to be deceived

and did not see why she would not
allow herself to be in love,
to say "I miss you" on the phone.

Susan was who Susan was.
Had Ben not praised her china plates?
And he was who he'd become,

not a partner in a law firm.
How to show a poem like a plate?
Have friends admire her for one?

Moonrise over Penobscot Bay

. . . Unexpected, beautiful, it was what
it was, amazing, lucky, a yellow disk
in a pink sky, south moving, its colors changing,
its moonbeam growing brighter, reflected on
the bay rippling, out beyond the meadow
peeping and Clam Cove quiescent. Unclouded
as it rose skyward, gaining perfect roundness,
even in its shadows it cast a pale
enchantment. On dark paths it shed some light.
It was exciting but it was not sunrise.
It did not bring warm light to grow in, in
the thick sea air, in the sunset of our lives;
photosynthesis was not about
to happen. Little as it was, it was . . .