

## **In My Father's House There are Many Rooms**

“If ignorance is bliss  
Then I'm a blizzard”  
he said one night at dinner  
we were stunned into silence  
then paralyzed with laughter  
he laughed too  
I'm not sure he knew why it was so funny  
a moment of clarity  
in an otherwise clouded mind

I found him once on the third floor  
of what they call an assisted living facility  
sitting on a bench far from his own room  
“I'm looking for my father” he explained  
“I am too” was all I could think to say

he's forgotten that he likes to be outdoors  
to feel the sun on the back of his neck  
perhaps forgotten that there is an outdoors  
so I take him out to the garden when I visit  
words fail us both  
I rub his shoulders  
he seems to remember liking that  
it's not the zoo or the merry go round  
but I'm doing the best I can

“you were a good father” I say  
he looks up at me and smiles  
“I was?” he asks hopefully  
I don't know if the old bastard is playing me or not  
I lie again and say “yes”

something drove him out of doors that damp spring night  
he was taking off his clothes when he fell  
the alarm went off but the attendant was afraid of the dark  
he was left out there until the morning shift did their head count

before death comes  
I recite the lord's prayer and tell him  
“you're going to see Jesus, maybe your mom and dad”  
he doesn't remember to smile  
I don't tell him he'll see my mother  
I don't want to scare the hell out of him

## Summer Pathways

a shiny green apple  
knocked to the ground  
by a giddy squirrel  
so anxious to pluck one  
he sends three others  
crashing down to earth

one hard little fruit  
rolls down the bank  
to settle by the moss  
a quiet place to rot  
the soft white dog  
carries off his tart prize  
white flag waving behind him

much later  
it will appear in our bed  
a love offering  
riddled with tiny bites

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## Voyage

promotion in a three piece suit  
long days, prestige, more loot  
corner office, city view, secretary  
might be seen as kind of scary

but for the old commander it is not  
to sail a desk is now his lot  
as a paper pusher he has no peer  
known for proper policy both far and near

I have no reason to despair  
a life of ease beyond compare  
it's changing on us once again  
and now at least I have my pen

so long as we have life in us  
there will be mystery and promise

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## **Approaching the Center**

first here must be silence  
the long slow descent into quiet  
off in the distance, a rumbled whisper  
the lilt of my long dead old ma

the mystery of the origins  
shrouded in haze  
long obliterated by time  
secrets kept without knowing why

called to mountains, the paps of Danu,  
where ancient peoples left behind  
nipple cairns to make the point  
aimed at the setting sun

my own mother before me  
drawn here in the midlife shift  
to find the place of her people  
named for the brown cow

now here at the bend in the Boyne  
the Goddess Boand's bountiful flow  
illuminates my vision  
and stirs new life in me

no longer young, yet not yet old  
I still have milk to give  
And urges more primeval to satisfy  
In this holy place I am renewed.

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