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Down East Journey: In Memoriam (excerpt)

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Down East Journey: In Memoriam

The settlement of Pleasant Point follows a narrow spit of land surrounded by the storm's high tide. I turn on the last road, pass the Catholic Church, park on Elder's Way, and find Tuffy's door. She calls me in. Waking from a nap, bright eyes, cheeks smooth and flushed from sleep, she laughs to see me, while the sea roils and leaps a stone's throw from her window.

...

The ladies come to visit Tuffy. Their words sew seamlessly back and forth between Passamaquoddy and English. Deanna, the Osteopath, went to school off and on for thirty years to become the first woman doctor from the Reserve. Tall and handsome, long black braid down her back, she brings Tuffy mussels she gathered. "Strengthening and cleansing," she says, "good medicine."

...

They talk of how so many people get laid off in the winter. But they agree, you can always find some work if you try. Even if it's "wrinkling." Why even Andrea, the one handed woman. She was born that way, the other arm, a little withered stump she'd hit people with. She hauls her sled along the beach, and lifts the sea weed to find periwinkles. Picks them so fast, faster than anybody. She can fill a whole onion bag in a day and make \$90 for it. Bonnie says, "They send them to China where they are some kind of delicacy. I bet they pay a lot of money for them there."

Tuffy says, "When we were kids, we'd pick them. We'd fill an old can with some sea water, put seaweed on top and build a little fire. Just down there on the beach we cooked them up. You needed a safety pin or a bobby pin to open the shell and pull out the little worm. Oh, they were so good!"