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Lobo

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LOBO

By

Bruce Pratt

B.A. Franklin and Marshall College, 1973

A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

(in English)

The Graduate School

The University of Maine

August, 2001

Advisory Committee:

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By Bruce Pratt

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Welch Everman

An Abstract of the Thesis Presented
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
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LOBO explores, *The Beast*, as human and animal, who appears in varying forms in the principal male characters. Of the human characters, Will Strang is the seducer, George Strang the manipulator, Dorian Hinds the paternalistic pedagogue, and Leo "Sly" Foxx Jr. is the beast in its most classic and violent form--the destroyer. Foxx is not a wholly unsympathetic character.

Set in the present, the book presents three couples, one in their twenties, one in their thirties, and one in their late fifties, who are linked in various ways, and are drawn together in the Moosehead Lake region of Maine. The geography and topography are distorted to avoid any possibility of the landmarks being where they really are. The story takes place in the early months of summer, and as the book unfolds another visitor to the region and his family impact upon these people's lives. They are a family of wolves. The male is given the generic name Lobo.

Lobo is the final form of the beast, and the one who is seducer, destroyer, and protector. He embodies qualities of all the various Gods of the Bible and Koran, and the Hindu tradition.

The battle between natural animal interests, and those of humans is examined as not a conflict between the two groups, but a misunderstanding of nature's essential machinations. Using human sexuality and sexual fantasy as departure points, the worlds of the wolf and man intersect. The generational conflicts within one family and the fight for male dominance in both human and animal families are explored.

Female characters are presented in relationship to their male partners. Andrea Strang cannot become a person, or be the person she believes she is, because of her husband's suffocating authoritarianism, Gretchen acquiesces, is smitten by Will, and Summer cannot realize her personhood without an intimate knowledge of the beast as personified in Lobo, and without creating an identity separate from Dorian.

A battle between the intellect and desire is always present. It is not at all a stretch to see this as a classical Freudian war between the id and the ego, though custom and convention are also invoked (super ego) to occasionally moderate the more visceral emotions of some of the males.

An attempt has been made to discern if peace between the sexes is possible, and if man is separated from the beasts only by thick layers of civilization and fear, regarding sexual conduct and what is considered pernicious desire.

The author is undecided on this issue, but feels that the character who does make a decision is Summer Roebuck-Hinds. Ms. Hinds becomes the more natural, and thus less civilized, character in the book as a result of her temptations, trials and redemptions, and seems to be at peace with her own desires.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Book One	1
Chapters:	
I.....	1
II.....	25
III.....	33
IV.....	44
V.....	57
VI.....	70
VII.....	74
VIII.....	86
IX.....	93
X.....	102
XI.....	108
XII.....	129
XIII.....	135
 Book Two	 143
XIV.....	143
XV.....	160
XVI.....	167
XVII.....	177
XVIII.....	183
XIX.....	188

XX.....	191
XXI.....	197
XXII.....	200
XXIII.....	208
XXIV.....	211
XXV.....	214
Book Three.....	226
XXVI.....	226
XXVII.....	232
XXVIII.....	246
XXIX.....	251
XXX.....	254
XXXI.....	258
XXXII.....	268
Biography of the Author.....	273

LOBO

Book One

*As in water face answers to face
so the mind of man reflects the man.*

Proverbs 27:19

CHAPTER I

No one ever had a garden at the lake before. At least no one could remember one. Some speculated that back when folks lived there all year some of the old timers might have raised a few vegetables to go with the venison, fish, and moose they lived on. Before there was a road all the way into Seemonus Bay there may have been a garden. Then boats were the only way to town and there may have been a garden then, but no one living could remember one.

When Summer Roebuck and her husband Dorian Hinds began to till and plant at their camp the locals laughed. The deer and rabbits, they maintained, would surely eat anything that sprouted from the sandy, weedy, soil near the big lake's edge. They were a curious, if inoffensive couple, thirtyish, childless, and not given to the pursuits of the others in their cluster of twenty-three camps on the bay.

They had only two small water craft, an aging wood and canvas Old Town canoe, and a small wooden sailing dinghy. No motor and no way to troll. Their camp was small; a solitary building, wood framed and cedar shingled, with a small tool shed behind it. It was one large open room with a half loft above it. They had a wood

stove for heat, though they rarely came before Memorial Day or after Labor Day, a gas range, a modern sink, an old Servel gas refrigerator, four gas lamps for reading, and an assortment of old camp furniture they had brought up slowly over the two summers since they had bought what was known locally as the Allen camp, or Loon Rock.

A doctor from New Jersey, Fabius Allen, had built the camp for hunting and fishing in the late 1920's, when the area was still actively logged. There had been many more camps in those days, some just shanties erected on small leased parcels of Giant Paper Co. land. The state had long ago bought up those leases and burned the camps. Most of the remaining camps were deeded properties, subdivided over the years from the large parcel the doctor had once owned; thus the camp and its new garden were located in the middle of the crescent-shaped shoreline of the bay. It commanded a full view of the Goodfellow Range and, on clear days, one could discern the familiar shape of Katahdin off to the east.

The Doctor had died with no heirs, his one son having predeceased him, and his aged brother having sold his parcel to a real estate man. The locals, most of whom had had camps on the bay for many years, were astonished that the Allen property had sold for the princely sum of \$60,000. The entire lot was less than an acre and a half, the roof would need to be replaced soon, and the camp had no septic system or much hope for a permit for one either.

The only other camp owned by people from the old days was the enormous Klipstein place at the far end of the bay, another deeded parcel. The Hinds-Roebucks seemed most content with their outhouse and solar shower. She was a writer and he a

professor. He was a ruggedly built man, blond, broad-shouldered and sporting a bushy mustache. She was lithe, with very dark curly hair, and athletic-- in a tense sort of way. He was outgoing and talkative; she more reticent.

In early June of their second summer on the lake, they arrived with a truck full of topsoil, mulch, kelp, peat moss, hoes, rakes, shovels, trowels, plants, seeds, and a small gasoline-engined, rear-tined tiller. All one morning Dorian crossed and recrossed a twenty by twenty area of sandy, weedy ground on the east side of the camp, near the brambly edge of their property. From time to time he would pause to rake out the few stones and traces of weed he had turned up. While he guided the tiller Summer unloaded bags of topsoil from the truck bed and stacked them on the north end of the plot. Sweat soaked their shirts though the day was pleasant and not particularly hot. He wore tough work boots, but she was barefoot, and they both wore cargo shorts. She would pause to pull her long curly black hair from her neck and wipe the sweat from her face with the sleeve of her shirt. They both wore baseball caps, and were slathered in insect repellent and sunscreen.

The black flies, not especially bad as many had succumbed to several late April snows and May frosts, swarmed weakly around the heads, of the gardeners who occasionally swallowed them or found them in their ears. At eleven-thirty they went inside and made lunch, which they ate on the small screened porch attached to the west side of the camp.

The couple paused a short time and went back to work. They spread the topsoil, peat moss, kelp, and bags of manure over the plot with steel rakes, then Dorian slowly tilled the area again. The soil began to look like dirt. In the dark tilled

plot they imagined a fecundity of fresh vegetables for the July and August table.

They dug silently, long beds two feet wide with a foot between them, then they dug them again in the European style, adding more kelp, peat and manure, and slowly the beds rose like long dark quonset huts in the warmth of the long June day. Their bodies blackened with sweat and dirt and the stain of the manure. They grew redolent with their own odors. At four o'clock they stood back from the plot and held hands.

" We should wait, Sum, until later to plant. "

"After we shower?"

" No, in the morning."

The water for the camp was pumped by a hand system out of the lake. Each spring after ice out, Dorian and Summer pulled a long intake hose out into the lake and anchored it with cement blocks. A new foot valve would be installed and the hose would be connected to the hand pump. Then the system would be primed and the water pumped up. The other camps generally had generators and wells, but the Allen place had been built before people expected such amenities. It had been built by a man who traveled each day from Englewood, New Jersey to Manhattan, to see patients with skin diseases. His life was one of sterility and gleaming cleanliness. He came to the woods of Maine for respite and fishing, for the smell of smelt bait and worms, and the acrid odors of gunpowder and the fragrance of freshly killed deer. The Roebuck-Hinds saw no reason to change that. They sensed a history in having one of the oldest camps on the bay. They were stewards of the past. Their garden would harken to a more self-sufficient time.

Filling the water system took half an hour. The system was fed by gravity from a holding tank on a stand behind the house next to the tool shed. That tank was huge--two hundred gallons. It was a galvanized tank enclosed by a wooden roof with an air vent, and a rectangular frame-accessible by a small door. The stand was climbed by an attached ladder. Before filling the tank two valves had to be opened to allow the solar shower to fill and the tank inside the cabin for the sink. They had built the shower. It had a small shower head at the end of a flexible hose attached to a black plastic tank that was heated by the sun. It was enclosed by a high, tightly slatted fence. For cooler and grayer days there was an old clawfoot tub in the house to which could be added water heated on the stove. They showered together soaping each other and taking turns rinsing. The water was warm enough if not soothing. When they had dried off they put on thick terry cloth robes and went into the house.

While doing the dishes and looking out over the newly prepared soil Summer mused that it looked like a wound scabbing over. The late sun had begun to dry out the newly made soil, sucking the dark color from it. Dorian was drawing a plot plan on a sheet of graph paper and had placed all the flats of seedlings and small plants on the dining table. He taught botany and biology, and order appealed to him. Summer was glad for his patience.

They ached as they climbed up the stairs to the loft bedroom. They sat propped up on pillows reading, side by side in their robes, as the gas lamp hissed, the warm down quilt drawn up against the cool spring night. Dorian fell asleep with his reading glasses on. She realized he had fallen asleep when he began to snore with a soft, sibilant stutter. She touched his shoulder and he was startled awake. He put his

glasses on his bedside table and shifted down into the bed. She read on, unable to sleep, engrossed in a story by Nadine Gordimer about the African bush. Finally her eyes began to water and she could no longer focus on the page. Summer put her book on the floor by the bed, took off her robe, shivered deep into the bed and fell into a deep sleep.

She dreamed. It was very cold and she was snowshoeing through dark woods of tall pines. The moon shone in shafts of bright light between the trees. There was no path but she was following a small frozen stream. She had ski poles and a heavy pack on her back. The snow was deep, and even with the snowshoes, she stumbled and broke through into deep snow. She startled a herd of deer bedded down in a blowdown thicket and they struggled to leap away from her.

She slogged on. Fear began to insinuate itself in the dream. She did not recognize why she was fearful until she heard the wolf. Only one howled. On her honeymoon she had heard wolves howl in the Minnesota night. She struggled to move faster only to stumble at every step. Looking up she saw his steel-blue eyes and gun-metal grey ruff. He seemed to smile and then trotted away. She took a step and began falling, as if off a cliff. In her sleep she cried out and awoke. Dorian did not hear. She was breathing hard and she shivered as the sweat cooled on her body. When she realized it was a dream she pushed herself as close to him as she could, restricting even her own breathing.

A little before six she was again awake and rose quietly from the bed. Dorian would awaken soon so she put on her robe and went down to make coffee. It was an old stove and the pilot light on one burner had been going out. She turned the knob

and the flame roared to life. The kettle creaked and groaned. She peeled a banana and ate it slowly while the water boiled. She filled the filter with coffee and poured the boiling water onto the fresh dark grounds. Slowly it dripped into the pot filling the small cabin with the smell of rich coffee. Dorian came downstairs.

"God, I slept well. How about you, Sum?"

"I slept fine, one bad dream, I guess I slept fine."

"What time is it? I left my watch upstairs."

"A little after six."

"I think I'll go up to the stream and fish a bit. I'll plant the garden when I get back. I made a list of what we can put in now. Mostly just the spinach and lettuce, radishes--that stuff. This far north there is still a frost probability for awhile yet. We'll need to water these flats and let a few things harden off at night, but the little I can put in now I will. The marigolds for the border--for the bugs--can go today as well, they're pretty hardy. Give you time to work without me bothering you,"

"Go fishing. It's fine. I'll help you when you get back. Stay as long as you like, I have lots to do."

Dorian filled a travel mug with coffee and cut a thick slice of oatmeal bread from a fresh loaf. He slathered that with peanut butter. He ate the bread and an apple greedily, then went back upstairs to change. Gathering his waders, vest, rod and reels, he hurried out the door. He kissed his wife on the head as she sat in the early sun on the porch.

When she came in from the porch Summer put her coffee mug into the sink. Reaching deep into a large tote bag by the front door she pulled out a ream of

typewriter paper and put in on the table by the front window. Deliberately Summer tugged her portable Smith Corona up onto the table and sat down to write. She was involved in three projects: an introduction for a friend's book on walking tours of Nova Scotia, an article for a literary magazine on careers in non-fiction, and a short story about a young woman adjusting to the changes in her life after the death of her husband. The story was set in Back Bay Boston and she had spent the previous weekend there, staying in a small hotel and walking the streets absorbing the smells and sounds so as to sharpen her sense of the place. From the tote bag, nestled against the leg of the table near her feet, she drew out three folders, one each for the story, the introduction, and the article. A galley copy of her friend's book, a slim volume to be augmented with photographs and maps, fell from its folder onto the table. Summer opened it and leafed through it again. She had several pages of notes she had taken while speaking about the book with her friend, and these she scanned as well. She began to type. "Many of the natural wonders of Nova Scotia are readily accessible to even the most timid hiker, and untold natural beauty awaits even the faintly daring, as Margaret Dursow's newest book in her series *My Maritime Hikes*, explains. Following volumes on New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, this book, complete with beautiful photographs and outstanding maps, is more than a companion volume, but is an extension of her probing and determined style."

Annoyed at the vacuous sound of her hyperbole, Summer ripped the sheet from the typewriter. She had not wanted to do the project, but Margaret had nearly begged her. "Don't editors and staffers do these things?" she had asked Margaret .

"Please, Summer, you have a name. People know you. Please...it won't take you even an hour. Six or seven hundred words. Pithy stuff, stuff reviewers and advertisers can use. It isn't literature. It's just travel stuff. Please?"

So she had agreed. She tried again, and then three more times. Finally she gave up for the moment, and decided to go out and look at the garden. She went upstairs and dressed. The sun was bright and the sky without clouds, save for far down the lake to the south where a high, thin, portentous, line of grey-blue sky met the lake. The breeze was fresh and cool from the northwest as it tossed the newly leaved branches of the birches and swayed the white pines. The cabin sat about sixty feet back from the narrow gravel road that continued around the bay to the far camps near Rock Cove. The road bisected the property between the house and the lake. A small inlet, where a seasonal brook met the lake, bifurcated the small point where the old doctor had built his camp. Along the swale six birches framed the view from the front window of the mountains.

Summer went outside and paused to look down the lake which sparkled in the sun and wind. She turned toward the freshly scarred earth of the garden and looked at the neat beds she and Dorian had dug. Walking along the edge of the garden, she noticed large paw prints running through the middle of the newly tilled soil. They were large and almost splayed like a big dog, like the prints her childhood Saint Bernard used to leave on the hallway floor after romping in the swamp behind her home. There were other marks in the soil as well, as if someone had dragged a heavy sack across the beds. She squatted to look closer, her back to the lake and road, and was startled by the raspy male voice who asked, "Come through here did he?"

Summer spun around to see a short, full-bearded man with a rifle in his hand standing at the edge of the road. She could not speak and her heart pounded. The gun frightened her and she was aware that June was not hunting season. The man spoke again, a small smile on his face. " I heard him last night. He howled off to the north aways. I knew there was one 'round here. I caught a glimpse of him crossin' a tote road just above the Golden Road last April. He was carryin' a rabbit in his mouth just proud as you can be. He's a big one. Alone, too, which is pretty odd. Wolves love company-hunt in packs, got they own social rules. "

She heard the word wolf and a cruel icy shiver ran through her.

" Sorry to startle ya. I'm Leo Foxx, my friends call me Sly, Sly Foxx just like in the comics." He laughed as if he meant the reference as a joke. Clearing his throat he continued, "Yeah he pulled down a deer 'cross from Ethel Meadows camp--she feeds the damn things all year so they hang around in that thicket by her place. He drug it right along the road till he came here. Must be a followin' that little brook."

"You're sure it is a wolf?"

"Ain't no dog or coyote. Hell, it drug a full grown deer right through here. Yes ma'm, it's the one I saw in April. He's grey, but got a reddish tinge to him. Course he'll start sheddin' soon. They say they come in from Quebec though some says some Massachusetts group's importin' 'em in from out in western Canada. Dunno myself. Plenty of deer here, but might raise hell with the young moose. But if he's a loner he won't take that much. Can't tell though, and more're likely coming either natural or introduced. One way or another they'll be back."

Summer did not want to introduce herself. She desired no familiarity with this man, but his eyes locked hers and she found herself searching them for clues. "I'm Summer Roebuck. Are you trying to track this wolf, Mr. Foxx?"

"Please call me Sly, everyone does. No, you don't track them. They can likely track us. I just wannasee where he took the carcass. They have a big range, but they're smart too. They'll take easy pickins like most predators. Well again, sorry to startle you, Summer."

Foxx stepped up beside her and stared down at the tracks. He squatted and pushed his hand into the soil and pulled some small hairs out of the trough left by the deer. He examined them cursorily and let them blow off his fingers in the wind. Summer was unnerved by his presence. She caught the scents of tobacco, sweat and gun oil, though she did not know what the latter smell was. Foxx rose, cradling his rifle in his left arm. He wore dark woodsman's boots, brown woolen hunting pants with suspenders, a plaid flannel shirt and a Red Sox cap. She could not guess his age for his face was heavily lined and creased like men who work outside all year. His left cheek sported a small crescent shaped scar, white against his deeply tanned skin. His eyes were a vibrant blue, but were small and deeply sunk in their dark sockets. "If you have no objection I'll follow his trail back along the way there," he said pointing northward behind the cabin.

"No objections, Mr Foxx. Please be careful."

He tipped his hat and smiled; almost laughed. He went off quickly, turning for a moment to answer, "Always am Summer, I always am."

Summer stood a moment looking at the garden as Foxx disappeared into the woods behind the camp. His familiarity in using her first name annoyed her. She had called him Mr Foxx. She went to the shed and got out a shovel and rake and began to fix the damage to the beds. The breeze stirred more noticeably as she worked, and a soft filmy layer of clouds began to shield the sun. Summer redug the injured beds and plumped them like a throw pillow with her rake. When she finished her repairs the soil was again dark and moist and ordered. At the end of the south edge of the garden she left one of the wolf's prints to show Dorian.

Summer hung the tools back up on the wall in the shed. She went back to the tank stand and climbed the ladder. She opened the door to the shed and reckoned by the sweating mark on the tank that the water should be pumped up. She went to the hand pump and began to work it rhythmically. Sooner than she expected it to happen, water began spurting out of the top of the tank and down the sides indicating the tank was full. Back inside the cabin she noticed that it was almost noon.

Summer tried again to write. For an hour she pecked at the typewriter, furtively but delicately, and managed to finish Margaret's introduction to her barest satisfaction. She wrote a brief note to her friend offering to try again if the first introduction was not what she wanted, and placed it in a long stamped envelope. The sky continued to darken. Summer hopped up the stairs quickly and grabbed a hooded sweatshirt from a peg on the wall and went back downstairs. She pulled on the sweatshirt and tucked the letter into the front pouch. It was a half mile walk to the Graysons' house where she could post the letter.

Mrs. Grayson, a handsome older woman who always wore long grey braids and whose eyes gleamed when she spoke, served as a summer postmistress. The screened porch of her cabin had been enclosed and thirty post office boxes, recycled from a modernized post office down state, had been installed along one wall. The room had a long counter from behind which Lydia Grayson sold stamps and envelopes for the post office, and ice, soft drinks, candy, fishing supplies and ammunition to the summer residents. She was a congenial woman whose husband worked for the paper company. They lived at the lake from April through November, except in the roughest weather when they retreated to their home in Nargate. The company field office was there and it was the nearest place to get supplies. Her husband went back and forth thirty miles each way over the gravel road to work, always returning with goods for the little store. In the summer she was open everyday, about anytime.

Summer paused to look down the lake as she came back outside. A line of squalls appeared over the far mountains and seemed to be enclosing the lake to the south. The clouds were thickening and the breeze had a coolness to it. She turned down the road westward toward the Graysons' porch. Crows quarreled in the trees along the northern side of the road. On the lake two motorboats were racing back toward the shore in advance of the storm. At the Henrys' their son Ethan was hauling his small sailboat up on the beach..

Summer wondered how the fishing was for Dorian. When he was gone a long time it meant either the fishing was very good, or very poor. When it was good he kept at it because another time it would not be good. When it was poor he believed

you got better through your tenacity and cleverness. He rarely caught no fish, and rarely kept any he did catch.

Passing the Meadows' camp just a few hundred feet from the Graysons', Summer was startled by one of the many nearly tame deer that hung about the thicket on the north side of the road. It was a nervous doe with mournful eyes and an odd whitish patch on her front shoulder. As Summer approached the doe bounded back into the cover.

Mrs. Grayson greeted her cheerily, "Hi Summer. I hear you're planting a garden."

"Well we haven't planted anything yet", she said pulling the letter from the pouch on her sweatshirt, "Dorian is fishing, and with the rain coming we may wait."

"Well not to rain on the parade, but you better get a good high fence put in, and make sure it goes down under a ways as well. If the rabbits and the woodchucks don't get it early, the damn deer will get it later. Anything under six feet tall won't help. We tried a garden one year--oh years ago down to home, and we got wiped out twice early. We rigged up a fence and the deer jumped over it later on. Before we put the roof on the porch, this was like a deck. I grew tomato plants in half barrels, and herbs in pots, but it got so as the deer Ethel feeds decided they liked the porch just fine. We gave up. It sure would be good to have fresh produce. The stuff down to Ripleys Market is either too ripe or never gonna ripen."

"Dorian has some plan for the fence. I would love for it to work."

"Be sure not to try corn--even that late variety Silver Queen--because that'll bring the damn 'coons out and you do not want them around-specially since you don't have a dog."

"I'll remember that, Lydia. I have a letter to go out. I used one of the stamped envelopes I bought last time we were up. "

"It'll go out Monday--Bangor then by air to Boston. Probably get there before my letter to my son in Millinocket gets delivered. 'Course the deer problem may be solved if Sly is right about this wolf he says is around. My grandfather remembered wolves being around occasionally when he was real young. His grandfather trapped a few way back over near Telos. Never have been able to persuade Ethel to stop feeding the deer. Says they're like children to her. Fattenin' chickens for foxes is all she's doin' now."

A phone rang inside the house. "You have a phone?"

"Cellular phone. Father has one in the truck too. I can get stuff faster that way and in the late spring I like knowin' he can call me if the weather gets rough. You ever need to make a call, come by."

"Well, I better hurry. I left some windows open at camp and I think we're gonna get wet."

"We weren't supposed to 'cordin' to the Bangor stations, but I smell it coming on."

"Thanks, Lydia."

Lydia went in to the phone and Summer went out into the graying afternoon.

Summer smelled it as soon as she left the porch. Rain. Wet, pungent, raw, like damp soil. She pulled up the hood of her sweat shirt and as she walked briskly home, a few fat drops splattered like tears onto the dusty road, dimpling the sugary dirt between the tire ruts.

Summer began to trot, barely faster than a quick walk, the sky darkening perceptibly by the minute. Halfway home she saw Foxx scrambling out of the woods on the north side of the road a few hundred feet from her. He looked up and tipped his hat and smiled. She shuddered and drew her hood tighter pretending not to have noticed him. He scurried ahead on the road eastward toward his camp.

The storm broke as if a giant bucket had been spilled on Seemonus. The rain on the lake sounded like a million shuffling papers and a cracking report of thunder rolled to the south. Summer ran full tilt to the door, hopping up the steps, and pausing under the overhang to look down the lake. Lightning lit up the sky and illumined the mountains, looming an ominous blue-black on the horizon. Then the rain came in a gusty sheet and she could barely discern the shoreline. The delineation between lake and sky was gone.

She went in and started a fire in the stove. For a moment she worried about her husband. It was after one. She sat looking out at the fury of the storm as it whipped the lake into whitecaps and bent the birches into praying supplicants along the rim of the lake. Looking out the side window she could see the ditches between the raised beds of the garden filling up with rain. A pickup rattled by, going east.

The storm passed quickly. The wind calmed and the sun returned. The puddles in the road and between the beds sparkled in the bright midday light. The

world looked scrubbed clean. The eaves dripped rhythmically. Dorian returned, his truck splattered with mud halfway up the doors.

Summer could tell from his gait as she watched him walk in from the truck that he was vexed by something. He always chewed on the right side of his mustache when he was angry or perplexed. His face was rarely inscrutable; his emotions not generally restrained. He came in, carrying his gear and muttering.

"You will not believe the morning--well the day I've had. I had a great two hours. Caught a dozen small salmon, one decent one and three nice trout. About eleven I decide to come home. The Pellus road was blocked about a half mile from the river. It gave way under a parked log truck and the thing rolled over. I had to drive fifty-six miles around the other side of Castle Pond, over to the Golden Road, crossover at Adams Bridge and come back around on the winter road, which looks like the Air Force used it for bombing practice."

"Was anyone hurt?"

"No one was in the truck. The driver had gotten out to look at some tracks. The side hill is always weeping there by the spring. Says he thought he saw a wolf. While he was out of the truck the road gave way."

"A wolf?"

"Yeah. Who knows. The truck spilled half its load and wiped out the tracks."

"A man with a gun came by here while I was checking the beds-a guy named Foxx. He said a wolf killed a deer last night by the Meadows' camp and dragged it through our garden. He showed me the tracks and the place where the deer was

dragged. I fixed up the beds but I saved a few tracks...unless the rain washed them out. "

"Jesus that was some rain. I hit it just below the dam. Who is this guy with the gun?"

"His name is Foxx. He says they call him Sly around here, and he said something about a comic book character or something. He babbled about wolves coming back and about some group importing them. He gave me the creeps. He had very strange, very vivid eyes and he smiled, or smirked really, in a condescending sort of way. I went to the post office just before it rained. I should have asked Lydia a bit about him."

"Was he tracking this wolf?"

"Not really. He said you can't really do that. He just wanted to follow his trail awhile. He said he had seen it back in April, in the snow, carrying a dead rabbit."

"Well I'm hungry enough to eat a rabbit. Did you get any work done?"

"Not enough, and what I did wasn't very good. I sent Margaret's thing off, but my heart wasn't in it."

Dorian went to the kitchen and made a sandwich. He pulled a bottle of beer from the Servel and a bag of pretzels from the cupboard. Summer stared out at the lake leaning her elbows on the table, and resting her chin on her folded hands. Dorian ate slowly and flipped through the galleys of Margaret's book. He patted Summer's shoulder and said, "You seem tired. You said you had a bad dream. What was it about?"

She shivered. "It's odd. I was snowshoeing through very deep snow, in a very dark pine forest where the moonlight shone in great shafts of light from time to time. I had a big heavy pack on. I was following a stream, and at first it was a nice peaceful dream. I spooked some deer in a thicket. Then there was a wolf. I heard it before I saw it. You know Mr. Foxx said he heard the wolf last night. I wonder if I did and then had the dream. The wolf saw me and walked away. He had amazing eyes. It's also strange because this wolf around here is alone and wolves prefer packs."

"Just how sure is this guy this is a wolf?"

"He's absolutely sure. Lydia seems sure too. Besides, a dog or a coyote can't drag a deer off by itself."

"It could carry a fawn off, a coyote, a dog, or a fox."

Dorian took his plate to the sink, put the pretzels in the cupboard, and came back to the table. Summer stared out at the lake. He stood behind her chair and rubbed her shoulders with his experienced hands. "Tired enough to nap?"

"Are you thinking about sleeping.?"

They made love in the soft familiar way of couples who have made love to each other hundreds of times, with the right pauses and touches and patience. She slept but he left the bed after she dozed off. He dressed and went down to the dining table and looked over his plot plan. He gathered his flats and seeds and went out to put in the plants and seeds he thought it was safe to plant. She dreamed again of the wolf and the woods in winter and saw a bloody deer by the stream with soft brown

doleful eyes. She awoke to a baleful moan from her own throat and the sound of Dorian in the kitchen.

As she descended the stairs he told her, "I put in what I thought we could plant now. By next weekend we can put in most of the rest." He was browning some boneless chicken breasts in a frying pan

"I can put some in this week while you're gone. You're coming back Wednesday aren't you?"

" Maybe. I thought I told you, I'm sure I did. I may have to go to a damn meeting with Friessel and Donovan. The budget for our new lab is out of whack. I told you at the Agway remember? If that goes as they all do I won't be back until Thursday morning." His voice echoed with annoyance.

"It's fine either way. I forgot about the meeting possibility. I'm sorry."

"I'm not mad Sum-it just drives me crazy. You always say I didn't tell you something, then remember later that I did. Let's not fight."

"No, let's not."

" Enjoy your nap?"

" I dreamed about the wolf again."

" Everyone is going wolf crazy."

" Well if I can plant anything leave me your graph when you leave tomorrow. The weather is supposed to be good."

"I would rather wait at least four or five days."

"Fine--I have plenty to do."

Summer set the table and pouted. She hated Dorian's exasperated anger when she forgot trivial matters. He never forgot anything. He cooked, absorbed in the task, and chewed quietly on his mustache. The chicken sizzled in the pan, and Dorian measured out small amounts of herbs and diced onions and shallots into the pan. Summer stuck out her tongue at her husband behind his back, half hoping he would turn around and see her.

They ate. The fire had gone out while they slept and Summer stirred the ashes, crumpled some newspaper, threw it in the tepid stove, added some kindling, and blew softly to coax the fire to life. The kindling soon crackled and she added a small split piece of maple. When it caught she added two more small logs, set the damper and closed the stove door.

The damp chill was soon gone from the room. It was odd to have a fire in June with the summer sun still in the sky. She did the dishes. Dorian tied several flies on his vise and tried to dial in the Red Sox game. "By the time it's dark enough to get the game it'll be over," he muttered over the raspy static.

"Did you know the Grayson's have two cell phones? Lydia says she loves having them in bad weather. Do you suppose we should get them too?"

"Don't trust me back in sinful Orono?"

"No that's not it. Today would have been a perfect time. I was worried when you were gone so long. You could have called me."

"Honey, I come here to get away from the phone, the fax machine, my email..."

"But not the radio?"

"Jesus you want them get them, but they're expensive as hell."

"Just a thought-don't get testy."

" I'll look into it when I'm home."

Again she pouted, annoyed that he was annoyed with her. She had meant only to have a conversation, only to talk about phones, but he was absorbed by his task, immersed in his flies and in baseball.

They sat in silence. He tied flies muttering curses when his dexterity failed him. She read a book, a new novel from one of her favorite authors. The cabin grew too warm with the fire and she opened windows on each side of the big room. Birds were singing and on the lake outboards thrummed distantly, carrying fishermen out to Bear Island, where the depth falls away, and the big togue are thought to live.

A truck rattled by splashing in the puddles and groaning under a load. The *killy-killy-killy* of a hawk and the chortle of a loon wafted in the window. Summer had once intended to study ornithology. She knew birds by their flight, their color, their calls, and habits. In college she had wiled hours away in the Mount Auburn Cemetery identifying warblers in their migratory plummage. She listened and heard crossbills in the white pines and grosbeakes in the cedar swamp. She was appreciative of the relative silence. A king fisher darted across her line of sight, streaking through the birches toward the shore.

A long ugly line of Canada geese sailed toward the Meadow's camp where Ethel would feed the sedulous shitters bread and pie dough. Her yard belonged to the deer and the geese. Near the top of one of the birches, the one closest to the cabin, a raven sat starkly against the evening sky, perched on the ragged stump of a winter-

broken branch. Two jays hopped about in front of the cabin just across the road in the weedy grass. A red squirrel ran along the road's edge and into the remains of an old stone wall. The evening seeped into Summer's muscles and soul. The birds and the boats and the souging breeze commingled in her heart and her ears.

She could not concentrate on the book and let it fall idly into her lap. She was sitting in a heavy old chair whose once sumptuous stuffing had compacted. Her buttocks were numbing as she sat still in the lumpy chair. She could not move, both languorous and paralyzed. She stretched her legs and yawned. "How can I be tired?" she said inaudibly. She looked at her watch. It was eight-thirty, and she could see the lake clearly in the early twilight.

Dorian sat hunched over his flies, bits of thread and hackle and bright feathers scattered on the table. His fingers flew and his bobbin spun in his hands. Every once in a while he would chew the right side of his moustache, and mutter "damn" or "shit" softly to himself. Summer marveled at his concentration. Dorian never procrastinated. He brooked none from his students. *On Time Hinds* his students called him, with some bitterness. His colleagues thought him a good scholar, if a bit sanctimonious.

The light faded. Dorian lit a lamp above the table. Summer sat quietly in the soft darkness and listened to the birds. The fire began to die and she rose stiffly to shut the windows. She pulled on her sweatshirt and sitting back in the chair pulled her bare feet up under her for warmth. As the room grew dark and the sounds of the day receded before the chorus of the spring night--booming bull frogs in the bog, spring peepers, the loons and the whirr of June bugs and the whine of mosquitos, Summer

sat as still as a deer in a thicket. Dorian turned the radio on softly and searched for the game, finding only static like the beat of a marching band.

She spoke drowsily and distantly. "What time is it honey?"

Distractedly he answered, "Five of nine. Ready to turn in?"

"Just about. I can't believe I'm tired-especially with the nap I took. What time are you leaving tomorrow...early?"

"By five-thirty anyway. I want to fish some of the little brooks on the way out if the rain hasn't swollen them too much."

"I'll get up with you. I have lots to do and it will get me on a better schedule."

"Sure if you want to, I'm almost done here. I'll be right up."

CHAPTER II

Will lay still in the long grass. He marveled to himself, that so far from roads, and houses, cars and people, the world could be so full of sound. Ravens croaked, jays whistled, a flock of grosbeakes chattered in an enormous white pine, the insects swarmed and droned. Far above him, in the brilliant June blue, the vapor trail of a jet, noiseless and unseen in the sparkle of the sun, bifurcated the sky. His rod, his vest, and his small pack lay beside him on the ground. He chewed absently on a sweet blade of new grass. He heard red squirrels clucking at him from a nearby stand of pines. On the beaver pond brookies rose to snap flies from the tea-colored water.

Will had caught one on most every cast, but they were small, and even when he tied on bigger flies, the small, tenacious, and ravenous, natives struck at whatever he offered. When he had walked up the hill and down the other side to the pond, in the first early brightness of the day, his shoes and pants had become sodden with the dew. His socks felt warm and damp, festering in his sneakers, and he thought he should pull them off and dry them in the sun, but the loneliness of the place, the absence of human sound, and fatigue, put him into a drowsy languour.

Will stretched and looked at his watch. He looked up into the sun and shook his wrist. The watch had stopped, the battery, he thought, must be dead. "No need of a watch here anyway," he said quietly, not quite to himself. By the arc of the sun he guessed it was two, or two thirty. He had been at the beaver pond, just over the low hill obscuring it from the Adams River Road, a rarely used old logging road, for a long time. Six hours had passed in a moment. He figured he had caught forty fish,

released them all, successfully, he guessed, as none had come floating to the surface. He had only lost two flies to small trout hooked deeply.

Every fly, mosquito, Hendrikson, Adams, caddis, even a mayfly-though he had seen none hatching, had brought fish. All had been small, the largest a meaty, dark, brilliant, fish of only nine inches. They were smaller than the fish in the Penobscot, but native all, richly colored and full of fight. Will guessed he should head home. His parents were coming to camp and he should be there to greet them. He could not move and thought about napping in the warm sun and fresh grass. He lay quietly on a small knoll, just above the pond. Most of the pond was surrounded by low bushes and scrub.

The area had been clear cut about ten years before, and the beaver had moved quickly into the small stream that ran down from a large bog--Elder's Bog, a few miles up the watershed, below Siram's Mountain.

Will had discovered the pond by accident one hot, windless, July morning, while driving the old roads looking for new streams to fish. There had been a drought and he searched for overhung streams, watered from bogs and bigger ponds where he might find trout and salmon holed up in deep shady pools. He had been with his girlfriend at the time, she was too shy to squat and pee by the side of the road, and had insisted that Will walk into the woods with her out of sight. He chuckled at the memory. "Sandy," he had laughed, "Who the hell will see you out here? We haven't seen a car all morning and the loggers aren't in this area now."

"Come with me", she had begged, and he had obliged, amused at how deeply into the woods she ventured. At the top of the rise above the road he saw the pond

shimmering and shrinking in the intense heat. While she took refuge behind a large white pine left by the clear-cutters, spattering the arid dust, he walked toward the pond. He saw a small rise on the glimmering surface and had been back many times.

Lying very still, Will contemplated leaving. The wind stirred and the pond rippled, turning a deep blue in the breeze. Darker clouds momentarily hid the sun. He rested his eyes, and shaded his face from the sun with his arm. He was not looking forward to his parent's arrival. It would be fine at first. They would be pleased with the orderly appearance of camp.

Will had mowed the lawn, cleared away the winter dead falls, swept off the roofs of the main house, the guest house and the workshop, and carted the pine needles and birch branches off into the woods.

With a sharp spade he had filled in the small potholes in the road to the camp from the main road. The generator oil had been changed, the tanks were full of propane, the bathroom gleamed, the buildings had been swept and aired, the dustpans full of mouse shit and dust and tattered pieces of paper had been burned in the trash barrel, the windows had been opened to the fresh breeze and the screens had been fitted back into place, the storm windows stacked in the workshop.

His mother would like that, but his father, who had asked him to do all that, would be vexed--annoyed that *his* work, *his* chores, those things which gave him purpose had been usurped. They would be happy through cocktail hour, then dinner, and even for a short time after dinner as his mother did the dishes, his father fooled with his fishing gear, and Will read. Then the peace would be gone.

It would not be sudden, no ear-splitting, shattering end to the calm and tranquility, but rather a small quiet incursion. One of his parents would start to pry, to insinuate, to probe. His plans for the future, the state of his relationship with his girlfriend Gretchen, the state of his finances, his prospects for getting a tenure-track job, or some other contentious, nettlesome, issue would come up-perhaps subtly, as in his mother saying, "Gee it is too bad Gretchen had to stay in Philadelphia, we would have been glad to bring her with us. She is such a lovely girl. She must get so lonely in the city all alone-why nearly everyone who can, leaves the city for the summer. But I know you academic types have so few choices."

Subtle, but mean spirited, that is how it would start. The insinuation of failure, or poor prospects, the probing to find out why things were not the way she wanted them to be. The third glass of wine seems to embolden her, he thought.

It could be his father with his, "I just ran into so and so--you went to Penn Charter with his son Peter. Remember him? Well he has a fabulous job with some new software company, making millions. I was surprised to hear that--I don't remember anyone saying he was all that bright. He went to some cow college didn't he?"

The insinuation would be that Will was just too lazy, too flawed, to amount to anything like the old man had. Always the insinuation that Will had been given the best and refused to use it, that there had been some great sacrifice on his father's part, hovered over their heads like a cloud of gnats, always there and sometimes biting.

Lying still, he noticed the sky darkening and the wind blowing harder from the south. He smelled the rain coming, and felt the cooling of his face as the wind

blew across his supine body. He sat up a bit stiffly and looked again at his watch, forgetting the dead battery. The pond was rippled like goose flesh. Will got to his feet and pulled on his vest, then the small pack that contained his empty water bottle and the remains of his lunch. He picked up his rod and broke it down. He slid the four tapered pieces into the sleeve of his rod case, tied the string and slid the sleeve into the case. The wind rippled the pond's dark water. He put his reel in its case and that into the large pocket on the the left front of his vest. He felt a drop of rain and, the wind came hard from the south. Turning he saw a streak of lightning off toward Seemonus.

Will began to walk deliberately toward the road, stopping and almost falling at the top of the knoll. Directly in front of him, thirty yards away, on a narrow part of the path stood a bull moose, the velvet hanging in clumps off his rack. The moose stood as still as did Will.

Though it was not rutting time, and the moose was fairly young, he guessed two or three years old, Will knew the danger. The wind picked up, fraying the fur on the moose's neck. Thunder rolled and the rain came harder. The moose took a step forward. Will calmly began to speak to the animal. "O.K buddy I won't hurt you, just let me walk back aways and I'll go around the path. Easy big guy,easy." The animal flexed his ears, and flicked his tail sending a small cloud of black flies, and deer flies, into the air like a dustdevil on a dry road. The moose turned slightly right and Will backed slowly away.

The rain came steadier and the thunder came louder and more frequently. Will eased into a small stand of young birches and the moose seemed to forget him.

The black animal walked slowly past Will, close enough that he could have touched him.

He went down to the rain-spattered pond, and with an agonizing slowness walked slowly into the water.

Will eased out of the bushes and began to back down the path. When he was sure he could make the car he turned and sprinted. He cursed himself for locking the doors, a Philadelphia habit he could not break even in the woods, and fumbled for his key ring in his jeans. He found it, but the rain and the thunder and the lightning came harder. The moose had forgotten him..

Will slid into the car, a battered Trooper, and the deluge rained furiously on him, the water making a deafening roar on the faded metal roof. The windshield fogged instantly, and he had to turn on the defroster to see. He slipped his pack and vest off, and put them on the seat. He waited while the lightning streaked the sky, and the rain turned the road to a muddy torrent.

As the fog was slowly disappearing from the windows the storm reached its peak, dead branches snapping off small trees, the wind tearing tiny new leaves from the trees on the south facing hill, the wind rattling the roof rack on the Trooper, and Will saw the moose run out onto the road and stop. A streak of lightning illuminated the beast whose eyes were wild and terrified, the animal turned and ran down the road about thirty yards and then toward the woods. The water poured down in sheets.

Will thought he saw something bound behind the young bull, but was not sure. Another bolt, like a phosphorus flash, nearly blinded Will, and the hair raised on his neck. The moose was down in the road. A piece of his rack lay beside him. Will

sat stunned, realizing the moose had been hit by the lightning, and was more stunned when he struggled to his feet and staggered into the woods.

The violent storm was brief, ending with a bright rainbow and a cool breeze from the northwest.

Will drove slowly toward the spot where the moose had disappeared. There was a small path-a run-into the woods. The animal was gone. He drove along slowly his eyes peeled for washouts, and turning onto the Pellos Road, near the big river, came upon a truck overturned in the road. "Fuck" he said aloud, "Now I'll definitely be late."

The driver, a chain-smoking French-Canadian, said he stopped because he saw a wolf, and when he pulled over to get a better look at where the beast gone in the woods, the road collapsed. "Lucklee I was taking a pees when the truck she roll hover" A pickup pulled up behind the accident, a big blond man with a mustache at the wheel. The man seemed deeply vexed at being unable to pass and told Will that he would take the long way around.

"It'll take hours to get this cleared," he said disgustedly, as he turned his muddy truck around.

Will waited and listened to the driver, Real, tell his story over and over. He wondered if he too had seen the wolf, as a dark shadow, and if the moose had been running from him. He told the driver about the moose hit by the lightning and losing part of his rack. The driver told him matter of factly, "They are veery tough, but he probably get hinfectad hand die. De rack got many blood vessels in it-I seen dem die from fighting when only de rack hees broken."

Will stood on the muddy road and waited with Real. Two trucks and a big loader came and righted the truck, and began to reload it. Will said to Real, "I am surprised you got help so quickly on a Sunday."

"Ah sheet", he replied, "Dere are no days hoff in de woods."

As Will drove off he heard thunder in the distance and saw rainbows on his windshield in the sunlight.

CHAPTER III

George Strang wore a perpetually arrogant scowl like a blaze or a birthmark on his square set face. He was the slightly built grandson of Austrian-German peasant immigrants. His father had worked in the steel mill in Lancaster, and George had grown up in a rowhouse on Pine Street, intermingled with the college students, working class families, small Greek and Spanish markets, used furniture stores, and small Protestant churches and taverns. He had lived at home, gone to Franklin and Marshall and worked fulltime at the Sylvania plant, to pay his way. He was the only child of Guenther and Eveline Strang's six children to make it through college. He boasted of getting out of Lancaster. He prided himself on not being a "dunker" and talked of his old neighborhood as if it had been a ghetto, and not the solid working class area it was.

In grammar school, middle school, and high school, George had been invisible. Five times he had been given a certificate for perfect attendance, but years later, when looking at old photographs, his former classmated had to consult the names on the bottom of the class picture to recall his name. Most marking periods he got straight A's, and when he did not he redoubled his efforts. He had applied to many of the most respected colleges and universities in the country, but his father saw no point in college and told him so. "There is nothing wrong with work. You can get on with the union at work, and get to be a supervisor. College is not for us."

George did not argue with his father, and simply said he would work and go to school, if he would be allowed to live at home and pay his board. His father agreed,

but believed his son would fail. Guenther Strang never saw himself reflected in his son. George was as stubborn and as determined to be a lawyer, as his father was to be a provider to his brood.

George put most of his college acceptance letters, especially those from, Harvard, Penn, and Northwestern, into an envelope, and whenever the numbing fatigue of working nights at the plant and going to school during the days slayed his resolve, he reread them. Those letters were his proof that he belonged somewhere other than on Pine Street.

George was an anonymous man, a day student with no friends among the nearly two-thousand men on the leafy campus. He had no time to socialize. When his name was called at graduation as a *magna cum laude* graduate, and winner of the Strumpf Award for excellence in Government, even the pre-law students did not recognize him. He went on to Penn Law, made Law Review, this time less anonymously, and joined the firm that later added his name to the masthead.

George had prospered as a litigator. His stubbornness, and his cool detached patience, served him well. His greatest wealth, and he was a wealthy man, came not from his law practice, which rewarded him handsomely, almost obscenely, but rather came with his marriage to the boss' daughter.

Andrea Klipstein was the very spoiled, and oldest, of the three daughters of William Klipstein, the founder of the firm. She had a rather unspectacular academic career at Germantown Friends and then Hood. She was a bright young woman, but extraordinarily vain, and given to relaxation as a vocation. She was amiable enough, pretty in a very sturdy way, self-conscious of being table-legged, and given to

wearing long-flowing caftans and dresses. She considered her perfect teeth and her quick smile her best assets, and spent long hours on facials and wrinkle treatments as she got older. Her voice was slightly husky and darkly suggestive, and her manner was seductive rather than flirtatious. Rare was the partner at the annual Christmas party who did not at least wonder about a night in her bed. George was honored by the longing looks of his colleagues.

As a child Andrea had white-gold hair, fine and lustrous, though it had faded and streaked in her twenties. Her tantrums, when she did not get her way, were legendary in the family lore. At camp there was a photograph of the extended family, perhaps forty people, and the only one refusing to smile for the photographer was Andrea. She was thirteen and had wanted to be in the back row where her thick legs would not be seen. When the photographer had insisted she be standing at the end of the second row, as she was the tallest of the girl cousins at the time, she had at first refused, then sulked, then scowled. When the camp became hers she never took the picture down. when asked why she invariably said, "It was Daddy's favorite. He put it there and it always made him chuckle."

Andrea was drawn to George because he was decisive. She liked someone else to be in control of the mundane things. Andrea held parties at the house in Wynmoor, not elegant, but still refined. She swam, golfed, rode, and shopped. She was given to neatness and George admired that. He wished a more frugal nature on her, but he was not unduly unnerved by her impulsive shopping and inattention to financial matters. His own mother had been given allowances in small envelopes for every aspect of domestic life, and George had found a depressing meanness in that,

and a deep shame at the precise allocation of his father's earnings. Andrea spent most of her money on clothes that flattered her. George was not displeased by that, and relished the framed newspaper clipping in the den, the photo caption describing his wife as the "Beautiful and Talented Mrs. George Strang, Chairwoman of the Hurricane Relief Fund." In the picture Andrea was leaning over slightly to shake a small boy's hand, and her freckled cleavage and brilliant smile shone from the newsprint.

George Strang was also, if nothing else, a strict creature of habit, a man whose activity was unchanging and regulated. The Drone, and Old Metronome, were two of the kinder names by which he was known to the young lawyers in the firm of, Laus, Strang, Demming, Klipstein, and Remmington, in Philadelphia. He was never a mentor, and always a critic. He could be a bully, and seemed to enjoy bringing tears to the eyes of young female associates with his brutal criticisms of their work.

George had meticulously packed his Explorer for the trip to Seemonus the night before, using the same arrangement of coolers, equipment, fishing tackle, bed linens and suitcases, as he had the previous three years. Each time he purchased a new vehicle for going to camp, he spent an hour arranging the gear until he found an order that pleased him. If anyone added anything, a box, a blanket, or a small bag to the cargo compartment, he became inexplicably vexed. George left an appropriate amount of room for boxes of food to be purchased at the IGA in Skowhegan.

At three-thirty, in the quiet suburban dark he awoke his wife, who pronounced her name, An Dray Yah, and at 4:15 they were headed north toward Seemonus. The trip would take, with only quick gas and food stops, twelve hours.

Will was George and Andrea's only child. The birth had been hard, and when Andrea looked at her raw and swollen breasts, and sagging belly, she announced to George that she would bear no more children. He had one of the first vasectomies in the firm. Will was neither doted on, nor completely ignored. He never attended a public school, and with no siblings to play with spent much of his time alone, or with one of a succession of nannys'. He learned French from one and some Swedish from another. He had liked the Swedish woman, Inge, and so had his father. Andrea, smelling something in the air, sent her packing. George arranged her permanent resident status.

After Inge's dismissal all the servants and cooks were black, and did not live in. When Will was to enter the ninth grade he went off to boarding school in Vermont, where he made friends easily. At Cornell he had chosen literature over law, much to his father's dismay. There had been many violent arguments and threats to withhold tuition. George could not fathom throwing away an Ivy League education on Joyce and Lawrence. He showed Will his packet of acceptances that he had saved and waved them in his face. "I would have given my right arm to have the chances you have. How can you be so stupid as to waste your life on some damn dead writers? For Christsakes, Will, a lawyer does something with his life."

Will had simply held his ground. Some atavistic resolve reared in him and he stood his ground. He knew his mother's intercessions kept his enraged father from following through with his threats.

Will could not envision a life at the law. In his solitary hours, in the spacious room on the top floor of the house, he had read and written stories, tales he would tell

to the bemusement of his mother and his nannies, at dinner, or in the evenings. Sometimes Will spent long rainy evenings drawing maps of Civil War battles, and imagined himself as a union general.

Solitude pleased him, quiet pleased him, he had some of the meticulous orderliness of his parents, but also a wanderlust and romanticism they did not share.

Will wondered why his parents had ever decided to maintain the Klipstein camp at Seemonus. His father had never been an outdoorsman; his only trips to the woods as a young man had been to the Poconos, or to Lake Wallenpaupack. He was a meat fisherman. He had a big boat with a fishfinder and bass seats. Fishing did not seem to relax George, and the fish seemed like a distant and remote enemy, an opponent he could not argue with or intimidate.

Will had preferred the quiet small streams, the beaver ponds and overhung pools of brooks. From an uncle he had learned to fly fish and as an adult no other kind of fishing appealed to him. Will returned almost every fish he landed to the water, while George weighed and kept all that were legal to keep.

When Will had been small they came to Maine in a huge Buick station wagon. With the seat down, and the gear steadfastly stowed according to George's plan, a small place was made for Will to sleep. He would be pulled from his bed, taken to the bathroom to urinate, and then placed gently on a pile of pillows or an air mattress, and covered with a thin wool blanket.

Will would sleep in the rolling dark of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, smell New York City in the incipient light of the May dawn, and awaken fully, and sandy-mouthed, as the car swerved and wobbled around the narrow curves of the Wilbur

Cross parkway in Connecticut. They would stop, just outside Worcester, Massachusetts, at the same diner for breakfast. Will would pull on his clothes in the back of the car, sweaty and thirsty.

The diner would be nearly empty of the breakfast rush, and they would sit in a booth where they could see the car, its windows cracked to the spring morning, and the bright green hood shimmering in the sun. Will always begged to sit at the counter where he could swing and pivot on the barstools, but his father never relented in his insistence on sitting in the booth. They would sit down and take the huge menus from the metal stand where they stood, half-leaning toward the table top. As soon as they were seated, George would check his watch and comment on whether or not they were making good time. Andrea would leave to "powder my nose", and Will would begin to ponder what he wanted for breakfast.

Will would be hungry, his stomach a bit sour, and he would want thick buttermilk pancakes with real maple syrup, that was twenty-five cents extra, and orange juice, with a side order of the dark greasy potatoes from the griddle. His father would have coffee and an English Muffin, and a large bowl of oatmeal. His mother had a poached egg and toast, or a giant blueberry muffin, and lots of milky coffee. The diner smelled of food and grease and hairspray and sweat, and tobacco, and after shave lotion.

The rest of the trip Will would be wide awake and munching from the box of Nissen plain doughnuts and drinking from a bottle of Polar Ginger Ale, purchased from the store and gas station near the entrance to the highway.

When he was very young, Will sat in the back among the suitcases and bags and tackle boxes and linens playing with an army of plastic Civil War toy soldiers, and making the necessary battle sounds louder than his parents deemed necessary. He would set the troops on the top of the Scotch Cooler which held the picnic lunch they would eat outside of Skowhegan, the tartan sides cool and wet with condensed moisture, the inside chilled by a can of dry ice.

George listened to a man named Bob Steele, on a station from Hartford until they could no longer get the signal, then a station in Boston that was mostly news. His mother was blessed with the ability to read in the car, something Will could not do without being overwhelmed by waves of nausea and the stab of a temple-piercing headache. Andrea read magazines and fat books she called summer books, or pool books, or cold night books, depending on the subject.

The Explorer handled with greater surety and stability than the old Buick ever had and the new interstates had made the trip quicker and more sterile, yet George left at the same time. The Strangs traditionally came to Maine twice, and some years three times. First for four frantic days around Memorial Day, when they would scrub, scour and air-out the winter's musty breath from the house, put in the float and the dock, make sure everything was working and then drive relentlessly home. Twice during the summer they would return for two week periods.

Sometimes George flew home from Bangor while Andrea stayed on with her sisters and the cousins. He did not go back alone after the Swedish nanny was let go. Will often spent the entire summer at Seemonus with his cousins, aunts uncles, an

occasional friend, and various nannys' or cooks. Andrea had two sisters, both married to bankers, and they each had four children.

The Klipstein camp was a bustling place, and as it was the largest camp on the bay, the focal point for whatever social activities took place. Long dreamy evenings and nights by the glowing fire ring, kids playing kick the can, hide and seek, or a game they invented called Diving Loon, adults sitting in wicker chairs or reclined on chaises, with gin and tonic or wine in hand, passed in relative calm.

A few times each summer a party would be held, and the folks from many camps would be invited and a keg of beer brought up from town by Mr. Grayson. A huge block of ice would be set on top of the gleaming keg, and coolers of soda would be set out for the kids. These were always Andrea's happiest times of the summer. She organized the games and her bossy resolve and seductive charms, enable her to rule the roost. She chose sides for games, and amended the rules to suit her pleasure, and as the oldest child pulled rank at every turn. If she could not seduce agreement she could always bully it.

The season ended just before Labor day when the great old house, guesthouse, boathouse, and storage building were shuttered and locked, the dock and float pulled up on shore with the big come-along, and then with great sadness the loaded station wagons headed back to Philadelphia.

Outside of Hartford, George and Andrea stopped for gas and a bathroom break. They drank coffee from a thermos, and ate muffins and bagels from the bakery in Society Hill, twenty-four hours old, and hardening. They spoke little. With Bob Steele long retired the radio was tuned quietly to NPR.

George offered running commentary on the news, but Andrea did not hear him, as she read, engrossed in a Stephen King novel. He was her new author of choice, and she felt it her duty to read as many of his books while in Maine as she could. The announcer, in that very discernible, flat, Public Radio nasaly voice, promised a story on wolves in Maine, after the headlines. "Wolves", George said aloud. "There haven't been any damn wolves in Maine for years, probably just hybrids some trailer trash let loose, or escaped."

"What dear?", Andrea said looking up from *Bag Of Bones*.

"Some damn story on NPR about wolves being back in Maine. I am sure it's a crock of shit- just some hybrid some inbred bastard lost. There haven't been any wolves in Maine for a very long time."

"Well if there are wolves I hope they aren't in Seemonus."

As the Explorer hurtled on in the heating morning George remarked often on the good time they were making. His radar detector was silent, the traffic light and fast. He was heady with the thought of making the best time he had ever made, and even a small paving delay on 495 near Boxborough, Massachussetts did not slow him down by much.

When they reached Skowhegan and George pulled into the Shop and Save supermarket, they were thirty minutes ahead of his schedule. They shopped quickly. Andrea had made a precise list and they had bought the non-perishables ahead of time. When the coolers were full and iced down George checked his watch. "We're still ahead of schedule." He seemed very pleased and Andrea smiled back at him.

When they arrived, Will was not there. "Jesus Christ, he could at least be here to help unload the car", George said as they began to unpack, "And he left the door unlocked."

"The place looks great George, he probably just went fishing, we're earlier than we said we would be as well. I'll get the food put away, you see to the fishing gear and the boxes. I'm sure he won't be too long."

"You'd think just once", George said stopping in midsentence, interrupted by the sound of Will's car splashing through a small muddy puddle in the driveway. "Well here is the perpetual student at last."

Will apologized and told his father about the storm and the wreck and the moose and the wolf. "Nonesense," said the old man. "There are no wolves in Maine- maybe a hybrid or something like that that escaped, but there are no wolves in Maine."

CHAPTER IV

Summer barely felt the bed rise in the dark as Dorian rose. She heard him go down the stairs and out into the yard. She heard him peeing on the ground below the loft window. She knew it was five, or perhaps even a bit earlier. She heard the water splash into the kettle and smelled the bread toasting on the rack over the gas flame. She heard him get a cup from the cabinet and heard the box of coffee filters drop on the floor and his soft, "damn it" rise up into the loft.

Summer struggled to raise herself and go down to sit with Dorian in the nascent light of the morning. A loon called and she remembered her dream of the dark hours ago, or had it just been minutes? The dream of the wolf carrying the loon in its mouth, the red head of the bird bloody and the wolf both seeming to smile. She had not been afraid of the wolf in the dream, but drawn to it, and drawn to its killing, and the power of its jaws. She rolled over and called down softly, "Ok Dorian?"

"Go to sleep, it's early," came the soft reply.

She struggled to awaken, knowing she should get up, while knowing she could go back to sleep. Slowly she came to a sitting posture. After a moment she rose, pulled a short, almost diaphanous, nightgown over her head, added a robe, and went down to the kitchen. Dorian was already dressed in his sneakers, jeans, polo-shirt and fly vest. His hair, wild and uncombed, sprawled from beneath a Maine Hockey ballcap, and his mustache was flecked with toast crumbs and a small dab of peanut butter. He looked to her at once strong, handsome, and ridiculous. She crept over and kissed his head, removing and then replacing the cap, then she brushed the

crumbs from his mustache. His cheeks were stubbled and tanned. She wrapped her arms around his big shoulders and said, " I wish you didn't have to go. Especially since you fell asleep last night."

"I don't want to go. I have to go. I'll try to be back Wednesday, but in all likelihood it will be early on Thursday."

"Be sure to call when you get into Nargate, so if anything is cancelled you don't hang around in Orono. If you let class out early, and the meeting is postponed you could come back tonight." Her voice was girlish and teasing, and he knew she was kidding him. Dorian sighed resignedly as if he was vexed, but Summer knew she had made him smile.

" I know you told me but I want to be sure. You have class tonight, then tomorrow you have that Tuesday Library meeting, then the budget thing Wednesday and that may go late."

"You've got it--I'll try to get the guys to schedule the meeting earlier, but I think Donovan doesn't get back from that conference in Albany until late in the day."

"Just call the Graysons' if things change-I am sure they can be found in the book-I'll bet it is a Rockwood number."

"I don't want to bother them Sum...'

She sat down next to him and rubbed her hand on the top of his big leg, while leaning her head on his shoulder."Ask if you can pick anything up for them. Then mention you are coming in earlier than planned. She'll tell me. She won't mind and I'm in there most days."

"I'll see Sum, I will see. You said you have plenty to do, if not come home with me."

"I would like that, but I won't work at home. Just try to hurry back. I understand"

He ate slowly and she sat nestled next to him stroking his thigh. He patted her knee and then ran his hand along the length of her thigh, knee to dampness. "Maybe those little streams can wait," he said. "It has been a little dry anyway."

Summer took off his hat tousling his wild hair and unsnapping the strap on the front of his vest. She loosened his belt as he kicked off his shoes. She pushed him back toward the middle of the cabin and knelt down in front of him, removing his socks. She held his rigid penis in her hand and slowly began to take him in her mouth, but only for a brief moment. Then she rose and pulled him down on the floor. She removed her robe with a shiver, lifted the flimsy gown, and impaled her self on him, her knees straddling the edge of the woven throw rug, rough beneath him. He reached up for her breasts and she lowered herself so he could take them, one after the other into his mouth, where he rolled them with his lips and tongue. She wanted to be long and slow, but the desire came fast and her orgasm took her by surprise, and she more squeaked than moaned, and soon upon the first came a second, and then soon after, he asked her to roll over onto her belly and he took her from behind, her knees and his knees, rubbing red against the rug, until he came heavily and hoarsely.

"Jesus", he moaned softly, "Sweet Jesus, Sum."

When they had cleaned themselves and he had dressed and left, she decided not to go back to sleep. She walked him to the truck and kissed him goodbye, her breath sour with the night's sleep, his sweet with toothpaste and peanut butter. She stood and waved as he drove off, his semen seeping onto her thighs. She waved away black flies and felt the bite of a deer fly on the back of her leg.

Summer went into the cabin and wiped herself again, this time with a soapy wash cloth, and rinsed with the cold water from the tap. She ate, and when she had poured a second cup of coffee, she sat at her typewriter and began to type letters to friends.

Whenever Summer felt writer's block she wrote letters. Friends rarely wrote back, instead calling her or sending an email. After she had written six or seven letters, it was eight and she knew the store would be open.

The morning was still cool and the bugs swarmed around her head as Summer stepped into the bright sunlight. The early breezes dimpled the lake and a kingfisher darted and swooped across the point. A small boat trolled across the bay west to east bobbing in the undulating waves, its motor soft and thrumming.

Summer bought stamps and chatted with Mrs. Grayson. Two muddy and dripping wet little boys came in to the store to buy worms and frozen candy bars. Lydia asked Summer if she had seen Dorian go out. Summer said he had gone to work for a few days, and that he might call on his way back to see if he could pick anything up.

"He got the number?" Lydia asked.

"We guessed it would be listed in Rockwood, or in the Post Office listings."

"Yep--Both places he'll find us. That is quite considerate."

"He was afraid you might mind, thinking he was using you as an answering service."

"Naw--that would be fine anyway."

"Any more wolf reports?"

"Nope, but Ethel is some worried about her deer. You'd think this kind of thing might wise her up about feeding them, and that Lyme disease stuff as well. She's a sweetheart, but she gets daft and stubborn sometimes. If there is a wolf Sly will find that out. He doesn't have much else to do."

Summer wanted to ask about Foxx, but a portentousness in Lydia's voice unnerved her. Instead, she asked Lydia if she had heard a weather report.

"Not today. They aren't right very often this time of year. Winter they seem to be pretty accurate, but this time...oh late Spring I guess, they don't seem to have that down. Yesterday they were saying hotter with a chance of afternoon storms--they'll be saying that until Labor Day."

Summer went out into the light of the morning, it was quiet and growing hot. Grasshoppers, dried of the dew, were flying and whirring in the tall grass along the road as she walked back to camp. The kingfisher was still flying wildly back and forth across the point.

Deer flies and black flies swarmed about her. She walked briskly and silently back into the cabin. She looked out the window at the garden. It was undisturbed and peaceful. Dorian had said he would bring back the supplies for the fence, and

that until seeds had sprouted there would be no reason to worry about it. His plot plan lay on the graph paper tablet at the far end of the table.

Sitting at the table she took the manila folder containing her story out of her canvas bag and began to read it. She hated it. She thought for a moment and in a drowsy half sleep began to remember the wolf and the loon and the forest full of snow and started.

Summer put a piece of paper in the typewriter and began to write the dreams down. Once she began she typed furiously, wishing she had a roll of shelf paper, or whatever Kerouac had used, and didn't need to change the pages. She wrote like that, constantly, for almost two hours. Then, exhausted and aware of the smell of her own sweat, she stopped. Her back ached from hunching over the typewriter, her wrists were tight and yearned for her computer keyboard. She did not read what she had written, but took out a blank folder, and wrote *Lobo*, at the top, and placed it on the table.

Summer was hungry and went to the old Servel and found the last night's leftovers, chicken and vegetables. Without a microwave she had to fry up the leftovers in the heavy old skillet that hung over the sink. She put the food in the pan with a little butter and some olive oil. She added some soy sauce and stirred the mixture over and over. When the leftovers were warmed she spooned them onto a plate and sat down to eat. The food was hot and she blew lightly on each mouthful.

When Summer was done eating she did the dishes and went outside. A strong fresh breeze from the northwest had come up and the bugs were gone. She sat in an Adirondack chair her father had given them for a wedding present and read. The

sun was hot and she went to change, get some water, and some sun block. She wore a sleeveless sundress and a wide brimmed straw hat. She read quietly, a book of short stories a friend had recommended. Summer had read many of them before, but the order and the choice in them intrigued her. It was an anthology in which every title was two words, the first being "the". It was a large heavy, hard bound book. The authors were European and North and South American. She read a story called "The Crow," by a native American author, that she did not like. It was darkly erotic, but poorly told and conceived. She was rubbing sunblock into her thigh when she heard someone call out, "Hello Summer. Fine day isn't it?"

She looked up to see Foxx. She was angered, and reddened at his boldness. She did not like the familiar way he called out to her in a Yankee singsong, pronouncing no 'r' in her name. Coldly she said, "Hello Mr, Foxx. Are you wolf hunting?"

"I told you Summer" he said, his small eyes glinting red like the flannel of his shirt, and pinched small like prune pits from squinting into the sun, "You can't hunt them. Did you hear him last night though? Sounded like he was up around Oven Rock, way up most of the way to the mountain. Some sound. I suspect that some folks would be afraid of a noise like that. I ain't afraid of what I can see and hear, only what I can't see or hear."

She did not reply. She sat self-consciously holding the tube of sunblock in her hands. She did not like to look at him and hoped he would soon be off. Instead he began to speak again, this time low and nasally, with clipped words and a cautioning tone to his speech, as if he were sharing an important and private secret with her.

"One bad thing is people feedin' deer. If you make it easy for a wild animal to get his belly full he will. He may be a loner, or he may be with one other female. If he is hunting for two, I read they need lots of food. If he cleans out the deer they's been feedin' he'll want more to eat. Now there's more than enough game around for fifty wolves, but if folks make it too easy something will go wrong."

Foxx stopped speaking abruptly, looked furtively behind a clump of trees and said, "That old rabbitt be gone soon too. Well I'll leave you to that book in your lap. Looks like it'd take a fair amount of time to finish that one. Goodbye Summer."

As he said goodbye, Foxx smiled, and she could see that he had a gold tooth, and several gold crowns, and was missing two teeth in the top row. He tipped his hat, a sweat-stained, green felt fishing crusher, and she saw that he was mostly bald. Though the day was warm he had on boots and heavy work pants and a flannel shirt, faded, red and white. "Good bye Mr. Foxx," she said, emotionlessly and with her eyes back to her book. He ambled away chuckling to himself.

Summer resolved to ask Lydia Grayson about Foxx when she could be alone with her. He frightened her and that annoyed her. When he was out of sight she went into the cabin and finished spreading the sunblock on her legs. She filled a glass with ice cubes and ginger ale, with a splash of pure grape juice, a drink she had loved since childhood. She peered out the side window to see if Foxx was still visible, but he was gone.

Summer went back to the yard and sat in the chair. She put on her sunglasses and looked up into the cloudless sky, and across the lake where small whitecaps had

been pushed up by the wind. Pulling her dress up to mid-thigh she rubbed the sunblock on her hands and arms and neck.

Summer sat sunning until she dripped with sweat, then went into the cabin, and put on a bathing suit. She took a thick new towel from the shelf above the bed and headed down to the beach. She knew the water would be terrifically cold and that all she might be able to stand, just five weeks after ice-out, would be to wade in.

Summer reached the small sandy spot where the brook met the lake, the beach that by summer's end would be fifty feet across, but which in Spring time was only a few feet wide. The path was rooty and soft, but cool to the soles of her feet. In July and August she would swim out to the float, into the deep darker water, and remove her suit and swim naked in the evening dark. Sometimes in the heat of the day, when the lake was quiet she would swim naked as well, hanging her suit under the float on a nail and treading water close by.

Stepping into the icy water Summer shuddered, wishing she could find the courage to dive in, go swiftly under, turn around and rush out to her towel. She knew the water would be cold enough to steal her breath. Gingerly Summer inched forward over the sandy bottom, the wind drying the sweat from her and goose flesh covering her exposed skin. She waded to midthigh, the waves lapping and splashing her stomach and breasts. In a quick jerk she dove forward into the dark water and felt the cold bite at her ears and armpits. She swam one stroke and then spun around in the water and stood up. Her heart raced and the wind felt like a hundred stinging cords whipping her flesh. She ran to the towel and wrapped her shivering body. She shook,

but gradually, like the rising fog of a July morning, she shook slower, and the warmth of the sun thawed the cold from her skin and bones.

Summer squeezed the water from her hair with one hand-the other clutching the towel. She walked slowly back to the cabin, the warmth seeping into her, the high sun casting a shadow before her. Summer went to the shower and rinsed her sandy feet, went to the cabin and got her robe from a nail, and another towel to dry her hair. She hung the big towel over the porch railing and went inside again to take off her suit. Stripping the cold suit from her body she felt the warm air engulf her chilled limbs. She dried herself one more time, put on her robe, and went out into the sun again to read.

Cooled by the lake, and warmed by the sun, Summer read slowly, her mind wandering from the text. She let the book fall to her lap and began to doze. She started several times.

The wind blew in long, cool, leaf-rustling, Autumnlike bursts, and stirred whitecaps on the lake. Summer could see them through her closed eyelids, she could hear them on the shore. A kingfisher swooped low across the lawn and toward the lake casting a brief shadow across her lap. She awoke briefly but could not keep her eyes open. She thought about getting up and going inside, but the sun was warm and the wind cool, and the sounds of the waves and the birds, the insects in the new grass, and the breeze in the new leaves, pacified her, and she sat slumped, almost inert in her chair: hands crossed over her book.

Summer dreamed. First she dreamed of dreaming, while lying deep in a soft alpine meadow, where a brook sang to her, and bright wildflowers waved in her eyes.

She dreamed that she could hear cattle, and cowbells and children playing. Then she dreamed she saw Dorian, sitting in a recliner watching television, a bit of bread in his mustache. He sat, then reclined back in the black leather chair, and was naked. A woman appeared. She too was naked--heavy breasted and sturdylegged, with ample buttocks and large dimples in the small of her back. Then she was riding him in the chair and calling out his name, and then she herself was in the woman's place, and the woman was watching and calling him professor Hinds, and then the woman was gone and he was taking her from behind as she bent over a small dark pine table.

Summer could not recognize the house or table, or the woman who had reappeared, dressed in a dark blue business suit and heels. While Dorian took Summer, the other woman chatted to him and then left. The woman's words made no sense to Summer, but Dorian seemed to answer, as if they had a language to themselves. The woman left and a door slammed behind her and Dorian took her harder, and then was trying to thrust into her rectum, an act she had allowed him only once. She turned to beg him to stop and it was not Dorian but a wolf with clear blue-grey eyes and a massive ruff.

Summer tried to scream and only a low choked moan would escape, she tried to free herself from the wolf. She felt his paws, warm and clawless on her arms, encircling her belly in a tightening, cinching, breath-robbing grasp and tried again to scream, unable to move the sound from her throat. In front of her she could see a mirror. The wolf smiled and his face changed shape, from a wolf to a horse, a fox and then Mr Foxx, his stubbly chin dripping sweat and his eyes cold and emotionless.

The scream broke from her throat and she sat up, trembling and alone. The book lay open in the breeze at her feet, her hat lay a few feet away on the lawn. She was sweating and damp between her legs. She felt sick and thirsty, her stomach acidic, her mouth dry, and her breath hard and sour. The wind blew harder and her hat floated on a dust devil out to the edge of the road. She stood up, shaky and sullen, her lips pursed and her face flushed. She stood a moment without moving, her eyes on the lake, the wind whipping the water into whitecaps and frothy waves splashing on the beach. Tiny new birch leaves clung to their branches. Her hat blew into the road and Summer began to walk deliberately toward it. As she stooped to pick it up it blew away and she hopped birdlike-a bit unsteadily- toward the far ditch to retrieve it.

She stood slowly and stiffly, running her tongue over her teeth and swallowing a hard dry swallow of sleep and sand. She was startled by Foxx's voice saying, "This wind like to blow over a fat lady eh Summer?" Summer put her hand to her throat and jumped back in fear. "You startled me", she said angrily, "I didn't hear you coming"

"Wasn't sneaking up on you--you seemed to be lost in thought", he replied with a guarded sarcasm.

" I guess so." she replied coldly

"I meant no harm Summer," he said almost chuckling and showing his yellowed teeth in a cold grin.

Turning slowly away and starting for the cabin she eyed him cruelly and contemptuously and said, her voice calm, icy and clear, "No harm done Mr. Foxx, no

harm done." He tipped his hat to her and smiled, his balding head sweating and his eyes narrowed to slits against the sun. "Good bye Summer, have a nice evening."

"And you Mr. Foxx."

CHAPTER V

The evening of his parents' arrival had gone as well as, if not better than Will could have hoped. His father was less quarrelsome than usual and seemed to be wrapped in a rare pensiveness. In moments of quiet he seemed almost tired, or world weary. Will began to hope, suspiciously, that his father might mellow with age, that his acerbic anger might recede.

His mother was effusive in her gratitude at finding so little to do upon her arrival. The beds were made, the rooms aired and swept, the cupboards arranged neatly, the windows free of cobwebs and fly-specks, the sturdy wooden Adirondack chairs arranged on the porch, all the lights fixed with new mantles, the stovetop scrubbed clean, and the bathroom gleaming.

Dinner had gone well, no arguments about the doneness of the steak, or the acceptability of the wine, a rich French Merlot, or the crispness of the spring peas from the farmers market in Philadelphia.

Andrea had always wanted a garden at the lake, but George had always said it could not be done. "Too many damned deer and rabbits, waste of time", he had said more than once. It was difficult to get good produce in the summer and it was the one thing every visitor to camp was told to bring with them. Big salads and fresh corn or beans were delicacies.

The long trip fatigued his parents more than it had in their youth. In the early dark they had both begun to yawn. George was quiet--more quiet than Will could remember him being on his first day at camp, when he was usually agitated and

authoritarian, ordering Will and his mother about to complete small tasks that could have been delayed until the next day. He was quiet but not sullen, and Will took his quietness to be a sign of pleasure. He imagined that his father, never one to praise, was actually pleased to have so little to do, so little to organize and worry over. His mother was also less gossipy than usual. She did not speak of Gretchen or anyone else Will knew.

After dinner Andrea insisted on doing the dishes by herself, humming in the lamp light and placing the plates and glasses silently into the dish drainer, as if she feared the clank of plates might wound the peaceful silence. Will dried them with the same silence, and put them away while his mother had another glass of wine.

The large two-litre bottle was nearly empty, and Will worried Andrea might get short-tempered, or meddlesome, but she did not. When their yawning and dozing became more frequent, Will took out his fly vise and began tying small perch imitators, a little like a Warden's Worry, that his old friend Rich Hartung had taught him to tie in the months before he died. His father woke up from a loud snore and said. "We're going to bed now, see you when you get up." He stood, took his wife by the hand--she too had awakened suddenly at the sound of his voice--and led her down the hall to the big bedroom.

The "when you get up" had not been lost on Will, and though he knew it was not a good-natured ribbing he took it as one. He was in the habit of rising early at camp, but at home in the city he was a night owl, preferring the quieter hours of the night to work and write. He simply answered, "Goodnight"

Will did not sleep well. He was surprised to be so long in falling asleep, as it was his custom to sleep at camp, soundly and deeply, almost suddenly, drifting off into the darkness to the sound of the waves on the breezy nights, or the mad laugh of the loons when the night was calm. The wind was light and the waves made a pock-pock sound on the rocks, and he heard no loons. He could hear the snoring of his father, measured and slow, when he strained to listen, and he remembered in his wakefulness, the very hot, airless night when he was fifteen, when he had awakened in the bedroom he then shared with his cousin Michael.

That night as he lay awake naked without covers, sweating and listening, deep into the dark hours, he had heard what he thought was a giggle, and a sibilant shushing, and then a distant mumble of whispers, and a gentle rocking, and the sound of an old boxspring or bed frame squeaking, and he slowly realized that someone was making love in the steamy night. He listened and heard every sound, the noise of a mouse in the wall, the whine of a mosquito outside the open window, the banging of June bugs on the screens and, the creaking of the old house. The rocking of the bed grew louder and he tried desperately to identify the room. He became fully awake. He wanted to go down the stairs and listen--through the kitchen and the dining room, past the bay window that looked onto the wrap-around porch and out to the lake and the mountains beyond, and into the dark hallway leading to the four adults bedrooms.

It was in mid-July and almost everyone was there. He imagined each bedroom in his mind and tried to envision the occupants coupled and rocking together. Stealthily he rose. He listened--holding his own breath, to the light raspy snore of his

cousin. Will tiptoed out of the room grabbing a pair of gym shorts from a nail by the door. He slipped them on in the upstairs hallway.

As the two oldest cousins he and Michael got to sleep in the main house, all the other younger cousins and their friends slept in the bunkhouses or in the leanto, or on very hot nights on the porch. Going slowly down the stairs he froze at every creak the old dry boards made, and sucked in his breath. He would pause and listen, then creep slowly downward until his feet hit the floor of the back hall. Through the wall he could hear the voices a bit louder, but he was still unable to determine which room they came from-thinking it was one room then another.

Will stole quickly through the kitchen and dining room, and into the hallway. He dared not go down the hall. He sat on his haunches in the dining room by the hallway and listened. He could not tell which room held the lovers. The sounds came like soft waves, faint then pronounced, then faint, then louder again until, almost suddenly, they stopped all together. He waited for a long time to hear them begin again, but they did not. Then he heard the sound of feet on the floor and first one door, that to his Aunt Helen and Uncle Michael's room open, then the one across the hall, where his Aunt Carol and Uncle Tim, slept opened as well. His heart beat audibly in his young chest, and he was frozen in fear. He saw his Aunts each emerge from the other's bedroom and meet in the hallway. They both looked a bit drunk and slow moving. They looked at each other and smiled, almost laughing. The sisters faces were barely visible, and had Will's eyes not grown accustomed to the dark he would have been unable to tell which Aunt was which. He trembled with this terrible new knowledge.

Will wondered if his parents, too, did this. He thought about his aunts and his uncles, and he was both frightened and aroused, and then he wondered if his mother had slept with her brothers-in-law. He waited for his Aunts to pass into their own bedrooms, then slipped back to the kitchen and outside.

Will eased the screen door open and then the outside screen door as well. He stood for a moment on the steps reacclimating his eyes to the different dark. He walked down the lawn toward the shore, climbed down the ladder into the lake, and walked out into the cool water. He took off his shorts and threw them up onto the shore and swam quietly. The whole family sometimes took late night skinny-dips, swimming out to the float and putting their suits on it, creating a great wet, dripping, mass on the cedar boards, and filling the night with splashing and laughter. It was something they had done more often when the children were small.

The water felt good and cool about him, the dark sky was starless and moonless, hung with a deep blue darkness. There was no wind and he moved with little noise through the water. He pulled himself up onto the float and sat with his legs dangling in the water. He looked back at the house, his eyes accustomed to the dark, and could see the outline of each shingle, the faint glimmer of the windows in the water. He sat a long time, not sleepy, his mind racing. Shortly he saw a flashlight beam moving through the downstairs of the house.

The screen door opened and his mother, wrapped in a large towel came out onto the lawn. Hoarsely and in a half-whisper, he had called , "Hi Mom, too hot to sleep?" She had at first been startled then said in a loud whisper, almost her own

voice, "It sure is honey, I bet it's real hot upstairs, you and Michael should bring your mattresses onto the porch--though there is little breeze there either. How's the water?"

"It's great Mom."

He turned his eyes down as his mother dropped her towel over the top rung of the ladder and climbed down into the lake. She sighed as she swam and floated on her back, her white flesh fusing with the dark water. He slid down into the water and it seemed cooler than it had when he first got in. His mother sighed again. "Your father can sleep like no one else I know. He could sleep through an earthquake. This is lovely out here. You should try to get some sleep--try the porch, or a sleeping bag out here, it doesn't seem too buggy. I could stay here all night..." Her voice drifted off.

His mother had the capacity to seem pacified and fulfilled at once by the barest of pleasures, while at other times she seemed impossible to please. He had heard adults say, when they did not know he could hear, "Andrea is spoiled," or "Andrea is odd the way her moods swing."

Will swam slowly to the shore and found his shorts. He had brought no towel and went over to the line by the bunkhouse and found one, still damp from the previous day. He listened by the bunkhouse door and heard small children muttering in their sweaty sleep, and tossing about on their bunkbeds. When he came back his mother was wrapped back up in her towel. She turned to Will and said, "Don't drip in the house, leave your suit on the porch." She kissed him on the top of his head and said, "Goodnight--if you can't sleep come down to the porch," as she turned on her light and went into the house.

His father snored on, the June bugs hurled themselves against the screen, and Will lay awake. He rose first on his elbows, then sat up and looked out the window. The evening was cool--and the wind persistent and gusty. He longed for Gretchen and sleep.

He could see the faint outlines of clouds and whitecaps, and he could hear the waves on the beach and rocks. A dog barked briefly in the distance across the cove. He knew that the lake was too cold and too rough for a late night swim. Slowly he eased back down and closed his eyes.

A dream came slowly, like spreading dawn on the plains, shadowy and diffused. He was with Gretchen and they were walking on a beach. Behind them were treeless mountains, and he knew he had been to the beach before. They walked and their feet made big prints in the sand. He then knew where he was--a beach in Donegal, though he could not remember the name of the town. They walked on. It was cool and they walked a long way in silence. The dream faded into another and it was Winter. It was deep night--moonsplashed snow in the field ahead of them fresh and unbroken. They could hear waves, but see only a long field, deep with new snow and wind--scoured drifts. Far in the distance a windbreak stood dark and bare. They trudged through the deep snow in silence, came to a road, and turned toward the sound of the waves.

There was a fire in the distance and they walked toward its flickering light. As they drew close to the fire they could see people skating on a small rink. There was an arcade, shuttered and grey, and a boardwalk. The stands were all closed. As they drew close to the rink the dream faded again to the beach, where he walked

alone. He looked back to see Gretchen smiling at him, her face streaked with tears. She was waving and blowing him a kiss.

In the morning Will rose first. He was neither sluggish, nor tired, though he had slept very little. It was just after five; the lake was calm and silent. He crept quietly downstairs and in the kitchen began to make breakfast for himself. He put the heavy kettle on a back burner to boil, and took two eggs, milk and a wedge of swiss cheese to make an omelette. He worked quietly, and without turning on the radio, as was his custom, to get the overnight news and the day's weather.

Will sat on the porch eating his breakfast at the big, dark, pine, trestle table. It had once been in the kitchen of his father's parents' house in Lancaster. The worn table had been at camp for as long as Will could remember, weathering the winters under a sheet inside the livingroom off the hall. He had moved it himself by unbolting the legs and refastening them when the pieces were on the porch. His father, if he noticed, had not said a word. The table was the only thing his father had taken from the house when his parents were gone. "They never had much worth owning", George said to his sister Hannah when she called to say the children were breaking up the house and selling it. "You guys decide what to take--we could use the old kitchen table at camp."

George's siblings had rarely come to Seemonus. They were the kind of people who waited to be asked, and who were hesitant to accept an invitation they could not return in kind. Will knew little about that side of the family, though most of them lived only about an hour west of Philadelphia. They were insurance salesmen and factory workers, and they spoke with the German rhythms of the Pennsylvania

Dutch country. The Klipsteins came to dominate George's familial world--they were all the family he felt he needed, if he felt he needed family at all. The language of that clan became his native tongue. George had often sneered at his own flesh and called them, "Dumb Dunkers."

It was five-forty five when Will started his car and headed to the river to fish.

Will was alone at the river. Salmon and trout were rising around him as he stood on his favorite rock, the one where old Hartung had fished for over sixty summers before he died. Two large salmon jumped in a silvery arc twenty feet from the shore. Will nearly dropped his reel and then misthreaded his line in his haste to cast to them. Finally he composed himself, threaded on his sinking tip line, tied one of the flies he had fashioned the night before onto his tippet, and began his false casts. A large salmon was rising in the foam about thirty feet in front of him, but experience told him that his perch imitator, fished just under the surface, was a better bet than a dry fly in the early mornings in June. Later in the season when there were many hatches of different bugs, presentation of the fly was more important than an accurate representation of the insect hatching. In June, with big hatches of fewer varieties this was not true.

The water was swift and his first two casts were short, and mending his line was a problem. He tried to calm himself, to slow down his motions, to be more economical with his casting. He took several deep breaths and aloud told himself, "Relax Will."

On his third cast a big trout hit. Will played him quickly in order not tire the fish out and make releasing him easier. In the shallows near the rock the fish rolled

one final time. He was the dark color of native brookies in the Spring, almost black, with a coral underbelly. Will brought him close and figured the fish at about eighteen inches and likely two pounds, the fish in that part of the river were barrel-chested from swimming against the current, and well fed on perch fry carried over the dam. The release was quick and the startled and wearied fish swam off.

Will fished for another hour and released eight more fish. His mother loved the taste of landlocked salmon, and though his father would bring her several salmon and togue over the course of their stay, fished deep from the lake, caught on huge spoons and bait, Will released almost every fish he caught. He kept one salmon, just legal length, that had been hooked deep in the throat, and brought it home for his mother's breakfast. It pleased him to be able to please her.

As Will was leaving the small parking place by the dam, he looked back down to the river below. A cormorant was sitting on the rock he had fished from and was eating a small fish. Two gulls dive-bombed the bigger bird who grasped his prey and flew off, the gulls settling on the rock, tearing at the remains of the salmon Will had cleaned. The stomach had contained several small perch fry.

When Will arrived at camp his parents were still asleep. He was buoyant. Not only was his father still asleep, but he had caught his mother's favorite breakfast. Will felt a youthful, almost juvenile, gleefulness, at having risen before his father. It was a small, and likely pyrrhic, victory. His father would find some fault in it. Will resolved not to incite the old man purposefully, but there was a restive desire in him to assert himself, to have accomplishments equal to his father's, to have his mother's respect, not just her muddled motherly affections. He needed to prove to himself that

his father was no longer necessary in his life, that he no longer needed to cower before him like a whipped dog, or kneel before his knowledge. This time he cooked without being quiet.

His mother came to the kitchen first and hugged him with delight as he cooked the fish slowly and evenly in the pan. He had made toast and buttered it and put it on a plate in the oven on a low heat. He had made good strong camp coffee, and set the table for three.

George came out at the sound of their voices, greeted them, looked at the fish sizzling in the pan, and said, "Just coffee for me," patting his stomach. "I've got to lose a few." Will felt the first battle to be a draw.

They sat on the porch a long time after eating. George was quiet, almost sullen, Andrea cupping her coffee mug in both hands stared out at the lake and sighed frequently, noting the clarity of the air and the snow still lingering on the very top of the higher peaks. As she stood to clear the table, she said, "Thanks for breakfast Will, it was great."

"My pleasure Mom," he replied warmly.

"Well... I've got to get my boat ready," George said getting up from the table and going out the door and across the lawn toward the boathouse. "Will did you by chance mix up any outboard fuel?"

Will smiled, "There is a full tank I made up yesterday morning." George did not reply, and Will felt round two go to him.

Will and his Mother sat at the table feeling the June sun's warmth invade the porch. The bare shadows of the birches outside the window fell across the dewy grass.

Grasshoppers began to jump in front of the big bay window and a breeze came up on the lake. A few boats churned their way out toward Bear Island. The lake sparkled in the bright light. The sky was cloudless. They spoke infrequently, both gazing down the lake toward the mountains. They finished the pot of coffee and Andrea said, "I guess I will get dressed and sit out in the sun for awhile, then write some cards. I could spend the whole summer here."

"Why don't you? Dad must get all the vacation he wants these days."

"We can't leave the house at home all summer."

"Hire a caretaker, or get a house sitter, the University has a list of reputable ones."

"Your father wouldn't go for it."

"Then come by yourself."

"Neither of us would go for that."

Will was silent. He wondered if his mother was trying to tell him something, something you could tell an older son, but he would neither ask her to explain, or try to read her eyes. He was afraid to find out what he did not want to know. He could tell that she was trying. She avoided asking about his job plans for when his fellowship ran out, and she did not mention Gretchen though she seemed on the verge of it several times. He wanted to talk to her about those things, about an interview he was to have at Boston College in a few weeks, and one set for Middlebury a week

after that, but he was afraid that even the beginning of such a conversation would ignite the deadly tinder that lay all around their conversations and lives. It was wearying to always be on guard. He felt lucky and lightened when his mother got up to change, and exhaled almost too loudly.

Andrea went to change and Will went out to see if his father would need help with the boat.

CHAPTER VI

Seeing Foxx had irritated Summer. The man's familiar coarseness and smirking self-confidence annoyed her and offended her sense of civility and propriety. More than anything else, she was annoyed that he annoyed her. She felt violated by knowing him even as slightly as she did. She felt his contemptuous eyes upon her even when he wasn't there, and disliked the smugness and archaic formality of his tipping his hat to her, after the vulgar familiarity, and the casual use of her first name, though she continued to address him formally.

Summer was not a snob. She was sure of that. She was, however, given to a respectful formality with those she did not know well, or did not intend to know well. She felt hunted, or at least pursued by Foxx. He did not frighten her, she felt no fear of a physical attack, but was sickened by the thought that his familiarity might be a crude attempt at a seduction. She did not want his company at any time. She wanted to choose her company, and felt that he had been inserted into her life with little hope of his eviction. As long as she had her place in the village he would be able to invade the perimeter. She could not wall him out without rudeness or a confrontation. He would not stay outside the perimeter without being told to do so. He would assume a right to speak to her, to traverse her land, come into her haven, and no subtle disdain or lack of warmth would dissuade him. She would need to fence more than her garden if she were to keep him away. She hoped that Dorian would return soon and that he might find a way to drive off the intruder.

Summer showered, shivering in the tepid water, brushed her teeth at the tap, and changed into jeans and a sweatshirt. Her irritation did not ebb and gave her an alertness she had not had in days. She sat at the typewriter and added notes about her dreams to the folder she had marked, *Lobo*, typing quickly and well into the evening. She wrote in disturbed agitation, jiggling her legs, one after the other, in a constant motion, as if she needed to tire herself out. She added the ten new pages to the folder and a story began to take shape in her mind.

Summer thought about making the villain a thinly disguised version of Foxx, but then found herself repelled by that idea. She was angry at the thought itself. Foxx was like a song, one you hate that stays in your head, one you find yourself humming though you loathe it. He was too insignificant a being to be in her story; his self-absorption and self-importance too shallow and too boring to be of any value. She stretched her arms and kneaded her shoulders and lower back.

Summer went to the kitchen and made a sandwich, slicing thick slabs of anadama bread from a fresh loaf, and piling swiss cheese, and sliced tomato, and smoked turkey on one slice, and spreading rich brown mustard on the other. She took a small piece of lettuce from a fresh head, and some sprouts from a container in the Serval, and spread them on the mustard side. She opened a beer and took the sandwich and the bottle to the table. She ate slowly, watching the light die.

The night grew cool and she shut the windows on the side of the cabin, but did not shut the one facing the lake all the way, leaving it open a crack to let in the sound of the waves. She lit two gas lamps and a candle. She set the candle on the table, but quickly snuffed it out when the glare made it difficult to see outside, and when she

realized it was a scented one left by the former owners. All perfumes and scented products unnerved her, and made her short of breath.

When Summer had eaten and finished the beer she put the plate in the sink, her napkin in the trash, and the empty bottle into the small plastic bin for recyclables. Summer went to the fridge and got another beer, then went up to the loft and put on a pair of thick wool socks. She took off her sweashirt and put on a longsleeved T-shirt, and a dark green fleece vest.

She lit the lamp over the bed in the loft and went back downstairs, then lit a fire in the stove, pausing to read in the police log in the Bangor Daily News, of the arrest of a man driving drunk and naked in a pickup truck along the interstate near Millinocket, before crumpling the newsprint into the stove. She opened the kindling box near the hearth, and was startled by a mouse that jumped out of the box and darted along the floor toward the kitchen. Summer was angered by the way the mouse had frightened her and resolved to set out some traps. The kindling and paper lighted easily and she barely had to blow on the fire to get it roaring. She went to the porch and got two split pieces of maple and added them to the flames. The seasoned wood caught quickly and after she turned the damper down the small cabin warmed quickly.

Summer went to the cupboard under the sink and found the mousetraps and then got some peanutbutter down from the cabinet above the sink and smeared four traps with it. She set them around the cabin and washed her hands. Turning out the lights in the downstairs she climbed up to the loft.

Summer rolled back the covers on the bed, and plumped the pillows, then took off her vest and jeans ,and got into bed with her book. The sheets were cool to her legs and she was glad she had left her thick wool socks on. Sheread for about half an hour. One of the mouse traps snapped. "Gotcha ,you bastard," she said aloud, but without anger. She realized that she would have to dispose of the mouse in the morning.

The gas lamp hissing quietly, Summer read sitting up, a large pile of pillows behind her, her reading glasses perched on the end of her nose. She read later than was her custom until she finished the novel, and then slept fitfully.

CHAPTER VII

Thaddeus Grayspire was the last man known to have shot a wolf in Seemonus, back in 1904. Grayspire had been hired to kill the wolf by the paper company, who claimed that the old grizzled loner had been killing horses used to skid logs from the woods. Some claimed that the wolf, which many had seen skulking about campfires looking for spoils, was far too old to have done the killing, and suspected a mountain lion, or wild dogs. After the wolf had been dead for a few days, horses continued to disappear or get mauled. The wolf and Grayspire were memorialized in a photograph, the old man standing in the snow beside the dead animal with his rifle at his side, that became both a postcard and the first picture you see in the Nargate Loggers Museum. Grayspire was rewarded with a deed to four acres on the shore of Seemonus Lake. Grayspire, however, decided to move to Idaho, and sold the property to a man from Philadelphia who had employed him as a guide. The man, Norris Fitzmanning, had made a fortune in streetcar manufacturing and in owning his own streetcar lines in Philadelphia, Camden and Baltimore. Fitzmanning was an avid fisherman and hunter, who retained in adulthood the lilting Irish accent of his youth in Donegal. He built the camp he called Mary's Point after his wife, an Irish immigrant from Clare. It was the largest building on the north end of the lake for many years until a sporting hotel was built in the nineteen twenties. The hotel burned only ten years after it was built and was never replaced.

Mary's Point was modest by comparison to the great camps of the Adirondacks or Catskills, but was solidly built on a block foundation, and with

greater attention to detail than most camps of its day. The very rich tended to stay in lavish hotels in Greenville or Kineo or over in the Mount Washington Valley of New Hampshire. Fitzmanning ran the place in a grand style for the area, bringing a staff of eight with him, and entertaining friends all summer. His greatest pleasure seemed to be sitting with his wife on the great porch, or on the lawn, in the evenings, watching the sunset over the mountains and lake. He courted artists and most clear days at least one could be seen before an easel on the front lawn or by the beach, painting the lake and mountains. He encouraged Mary to paint and hired great artists to teach her. She was not without talent.

Fitzmanning sold the camp to Klipstein when his beloved Mary died suddenly, and he could no longer bear to be there. Two of her oils, both sunset scenes painted before the level of the lake changed, hung in the Strang's house in Philadelphia. For many years they had traveled back and forth, spending the summer in the living room at camp.

The main house had once stood over two hundred feet from the lake's edge, but in the fifties, to increase the hydro-power potential of the lake, the dam at the south outlet was raised three feet, and the shore moved over the sandy grasses to within thirty feet of the house. The lake bottom sloped slowly away, and was sandy and without weeds. Over the years the shore had been riprapped and bouldered to prevent the ice from eroding the bank and undermining the house. Birches had sprung up and overhung the shoreline, except directly in front of the house. Mary Fitzmanning's paintings showed a field, dotted with small bushes and stubby birches, and a long sloping beach, with a dock that ran thirty feet into the lake. A large launch,

two wooden canoes, and a small catboat were moored along the dock. Locals still called the place Mary's Point.

Leo Foxx Sr. had once been the caretaker of the camp for Andrea's father, Horst Klipstein. He kept the roofs free of snow in the winter, and cut ice for the icehouse, long ago rotted away, and readied the place for the arrival in late May of the old man and his wife. For two or three weeks they relaxed in relative quiet. As soon as school was out the children, and later their families, would arrive to pass the summer in idle pleasure, boating, canoeing, swimming, fishing, taking rainy day trips into Nargate in the big Kris Kraft, playing hide-and-seek, kick-the-can, I Spy, and most of all eating, drinking and partying with relatives and guests. Aunts, uncles, and cousins came and went. Often they were picked up in Nargate by boat, or from the airport in Bangor, or simply appeared one afternoon in a large station wagon from home. Often the men would come with their families, stay a few weeks, return to Philadelphia, or Baltimore, or New York, and reappear later, their wives and children staying on.

The cook's job was an arduous one. She had to be prepared to serve from two to twenty-five on short notice. Supplies had to be brought from town, and there was no phone. Horst believed in formal dinners, the adults dressed in decent clothes, sat at a huge table in the dining room, and when there was room so did the children. When there was a full camp, the children ate first, and were turned out to play. For many years the cook and her husband, who was the hired man, lived in a small cabin at the back of the property. That, too, had been torn down once servants no longer came north with the family. The hired man simply did the things Leo did not have

time to do. He cut the grass with a pushmower, fixed potholes in the driveway, split wood for the fires, and made repairs when needed to inner tubes and floats.

Lists were compiled and Leo, or the hired man, had to drive into Nargate every few days, or take the boat down, to fetch supplies.

Leo Foxx Senior had outlived two wives and was only in his forties when he came to work at Mary's Point. He lived in a camp without running water about a half mile away, back off a tote road on the eastern side of the bay. His main job was as an estimator for the paper company, figuring out, with amazing accuracy, in his head, the board feet of timber in a stand. He came to Mary's Point early in the morning, and then again after work, maintaining the camp, its plumbing, pumps, generators, and motorboats, and replacing rotting sills, and scraping and painting buildings. He had his Sundays off and generally went into Nargate with his son, or took him fishing in the remote streams north of where the Golden Road now runs.

Sometimes Leo's son, just known as Junior, came with him to camp. He was a bold, cocky boy, with no remarkable skills. During the school year the boy lived in Nargate with his father's first wife's stepsister and her husband. They were childless and loved the boy unreservedly. There he was scrubbed clean, polished and doted on. He was neither a problem at school, nor a scholar. Though his Aunt Hazel, as he called his surrogate mother, was a bright woman and tried to help him succeed, the boy was a dreamer, always regaling her with tales of the great things he would do when he was a man. His teachers always complimented his manners, but fretted his lack of attention. Every year, Hazel, and Leo who came to town for conferences and many weekends, were told that the boy always had his gaze focused out the window.

When Junior graduated he had the sentence; "No one knows me, but they will," put under his senior photograph.

Each June Junior came back to Seemonus to spend the summer with his father, often going to work with him in his bright Ford company truck. The boy talked constantly, but his father, whose winters were long and lonely, loved having his son around. The boy was darker than his father, with the complexion of his mother who had been French and Penobscot.

The boy's mother had been a young pretty girl, Renee, whose life in the woods had aged quickly, with its harsh isolation and long relentless winters. She had been the elder Foxx's second wife. His first wife, Elsie, had drowned when she tried to drive through a stream that had crested the old Pellos Road. The bridge had been swept away beneath the truck. She had been coming home to Seemonus from Nargate where she had been to the doctor, and to the store to buy supplies. She was fresh with the news that she was pregnant. There was no autopsy, and neither Leo ever knew of their dead relation. Doctor Phillipston had no heart to tell the elder Foxx the news.

Renee had been killed by a falling branch. She had canoed across the bay to a berry patch early one hot Friday July morning, just as the sun was lighting the lake, and just after kissing her son and husband goodbye. She had gone early to avoid canoeing in the afternoon wind. She was a strong woman, raised in the woods, and she made jams and pies to sell to the summer people, for pocket money. The family had been to the berry patch the previous weekend and the blackberries were nearly ripe then.

Renee beached her canoe on a small narrow piece of sand among the the big rocks of the eastern shore of the bay. She tied the painter to a dead cedar tree, its roots exposed around a big rock, and its branches devoid of needles. As she tightened the knot the tree shook. She looked up into the sun, a loud crack rending the silent morning, as a large branch from an adjacent birch fell on her. She had no time to scream. Leo found her late in the day, her head pinned between the dead branch and the rock. He bore her home in his small boat, the Johnson 7.5 droning and keening, to the landing by Bushy Brook where Renee had pushed off . His son, then four, ran toward the boat though Leo hollered at him and ordered him to go back to the house. The little boy screamed when he saw his mother limp in the bottom of the boat, blood dried on her face, and deer flies gathered on her brusied forehead. Leo beached the boat and grabbed his son up in his arms and muttered, "Momma has gone to be with Jesus...she's in heaven Leo, she is with God and Jesus."

The boy could not be consoled and fought with all his might to wrest himself from his father's massive arms. He clawed and bit, his father holding him tighter. His screams brought neighbors, and they carried the young woman's stiffening body to the cabin in the woods. Clark Rousseau, the Klipstein's hired man, ran back to Mary's Point, and asked Horst if he could take the big boat to town to get the undertaker and the sheriff. The old man offered any help he could give. Four hours later, after a flat tire, the Carlton's Funeral Home hearse and Dr. Phillipston, who served as coroner, arrived to take Renee away in the gathering darkness of Summer night.

Three days after the funeral Leo Foxx added to his jobs as estimator and father the job of caretaker for Mary's Point.

For twenty years he worked for the family, and when he retired, the next generation decided they would manage the summer work by themselves, hiring Leo Jr. only to keep the snows from the roofs in winter, and to keep an eye out for the place. Leo never married again, though he did have a live-in girlfriend, for a few summers, a retired teacher named Margaret from downstate. Leo spent the winter with her after he retired, and then they came to Seemonus when the weather warmed. Leo Jr. stayed on in the camp off the tote road, and took over his father's job with the paper company, a common practice for many years, but when the company was sold to an out of state company, he was let go by his new boss, Mike Adams. His cockiness and secretiveness alarmed his new boss. He felt Leo was capable of dangerous violence; he felt it lay just beneath the surface of his weathered skin, and near the tip of his sarcastic and cocky tongue. The new man knew Leo was not well-loved and his dismissal would bring no complaints. Adams fired Leo on a Friday in April. He chose April because he knew Leo's prospects for finding a new job would be best when the seasonal employers were desperately seeking help.

Leo simply took to living off the land, his savings, and the odd jobs he could find around Seemonus in the summer. When his father died Leo inherited the camp, fifteen thousand in cash, his boat and motor, and his truck. He sold the truck, and his father's old motor, and bought a twenty-foot fiberglass boat with a forty-horse power outboard. He deposited the money in the Bangor Savings Bank branch in Nargate, and withdrew the interest every December first. He refused to invest the money, and was content with his passbook savings account. Twice Adams found the tires on his company truck slashed, and twice he ignored the problem.

Soon Leo was glad to be free from the routine of a job. He began to insist that he had quit his job, telling anyone who would listen that he had done so for “moral” reasons. For several years he was a fixture at church suppers, community dances, and fairs. Leo was known as a harmless boaster, and an old bachelor. Gradually, when he could no longer find anyone to listen to his tales, he retreated to his camp, spending most of his time in the woods. Woodsmen regarded him with caution because he was always armed. Sometimes he would carry both a holstered thirty-two pistol, and a thirty-thirty bolt action rifle, appearing from out of the woods into a clearing where men were working, always tipping his hat when leaving, and staying just to the limit of his welcome. Sometimes he would appear wearing an old Boy Scout knapsack, greasy and trail worn, over his fishing vest, with a cooking kit and a canteen hanging from the frame, a backpacker’s rod rolled inside a bedroll, and his rifle slung over his shoulder. He always wore a stained crusher, and no matter the heat, a flannel shirt. His shirts were always red, sweat-stained and faded. No one could remember seeing him in a new one.

Often a seasoned woodsman could smell Leo before he could see him emerging from the cover, redolent with sweat, mink oil, and fly dope. He no longer did business at Mary’s Point face to face. Once a year he sent a bill on lined notebook paper to George Strang, in a pre-stamped business envelope, to his office address. Each year he raised his fee by five dollars. The bill was simple. Unless there was some special damage that needed immediate attention, Foxx simply wrote in a simple school boy style, “Bill for keeping roofs clear at Mary’s Point Camp. \$175.00.” He signed it,” Leo, (Sly) Foxx Jr.”

If a tree fell on a building or a window was broken, he would fix it and add a simple line to the bill itemizing his material costs and a charge of \$9.00 an hour.

Except for chance meetings on the Grayson's porch, or in Nargate, or while passing on the road, the Strangs rarely saw their lone employee. Leo had been surprised when George had bought out Andrea's siblings. Leo had enjoyed the louder, more peopled, Mary's Point of his youth. When they met they spoke politely and nervously, both the Strang's and Leo ill at ease with each other. Leo had a strange, almost benign, dislike for George Strang but bore neither Andrea or Will any ill will. In fact he had often fantasized about Andrea, drawn to her sturdiness and light hair.

Though Andrea was ten years his senior, he still found her attractive. He liked her better than most any woman he knew, as she was softer, warmer in her language, and much wealthier. She never made Foxx feel stupid. When he had come to camp with his father, when she was young, she was nicer to him than the other sisters. She would get him butterscotch pudding and fresh doughnuts from the kitchen, and cold bottles of Bubble-Up and Coca Cola from the cooler. Perhaps she spoiled him as she wanted to be spoiled. Lee had seen her pout and stamp her feet when she did not get her way. She was always kind to him, not doting, but simply kind.

When George first appeared at Mary's Point, Foxx had been reticent to speak to him. He had taken the one joy out of his summer, those few hours and moments each season, when he was the peer of the pretty rich girl from away. She was still kind to him, but it became their age, and less their station that kept them apart. The first summer she came with George he saw her drunk for the first time and it sickened

him. She was loud and brash, and said smutty things. He heard her say “fuck” and “asshole.” He found excuses not to come to Mary’s Point.

One night Leo heard people swimming in the dark. It was after ten and very warm. He had been out walking. He was alone, his father on business, or more likely visiting a girl friend overnight in Nargate. Leo was almost fifteen and Andrea twenty-four. George was already twenty-eight and working for the family firm. Foxx crept up silently toward the camp, but feared he would be heard by one of the dogs. He ran down the shore to the west, putting his scent upwind, and waded into the shallow water. He made his way along the rocks, slipping silently in and out of the water until he was near the Mary’s Point beach. He could see the old man and his wife sitting reading on the porch, two friends from Philadelphia sat with them, and another old woman he did not recognize. He was perhaps fifty yards away from the float and the dock. Andrea’s two younger sisters and some friends were sitting on the float, while two boys, both in their late teens were standing on the float rocking it up and down and back and forth. They tipped it enough to spill everyone into the lake, and a great laughter shocked the night’s silence.

Foxx watched, seated among the large boulders. He could see clearly into the house, the gas lamps were lit, and extra Coleman lanterns sat on the big table on the porch. Just above him on a small berm, pushed up years before by the ice-sheet at ice out, there was a small wooden platform. When guests were so abundant as to overflow the mainhouse, bunkhouse, and the two beds over the boathouse, a heavy canvas Army surplus tent and cots tent were set up on the platform.

Foxx heard voices whispering, and the light tread of feet on the sandy soil above him. He heard the brush of the long grass on ankles, and he froze. He heard a soft sigh. He heard Andrea say, "George this isn't a good idea."

"Why? No one will come here, they think we are walking down to the old hotel landing."

"What if someone comes? My sisters might think of the same thing."

"Come on Andrea its been so long."

"Look my father will kill us both if he finds out we're sleeping together."

"Come on Andrea, we're engaged, he knows..."

" But we can't throw it in his face either. I'll do you with my hand."

"No. I want to make love to you. Here now. Not later, not next month back home."

Foxx heard them sit down on the platform. The words engaged, but confused him. He could not believe them or understand their meaning in any real way. He heard them kissing and he heard Andrea sigh and say, "No George please, I'll make you come, I will just don't..."

Foxx heard a soft ripping sound, then Andrea's voice in a soft whisper say, "Ok baby, Ok, let me get out of my suit." It was quiet for a minute. Andrea gave a deep, quick sigh and exhaled in a loud rush of air, "Easy baby, easy George, be quiet, please be quiet."

Foxx was frozen with fear, but strained his body noiselessly in an attempt to see. He heard his own heart pound and was sure it would give him away. He tried to hold his breath and then exhale as quietly as he could. He was sure they would hear

his breathing. He heard Andrea stifling a groan and then heard her curse softly, "O fuck, O fuck". Foxx felt his stomach turn and heard it rumble. He heard George gasp and Andrea shush him. Then it was again quiet.

He stayed still, frozen, and scared, his stomach tight and sour. His heart raced. After a long silence he heard Andrea say, "I have to wash off. Be quiet and I'll slip down the rocks." Foxx almost cried out in fear. He huddled himself down into the rocks and held his breath--his heart unbearably loud in his ears.

Andrea slipped stealthily down the rocks only ten feet beyond where he hid. He remembered what his father had taught him about stalking a deer, about breathing slowly and noiselessly. Her naked body flashed briefly before him in the darkness. He watched her cup a palm full of water between her legs. Her breasts glistened in the faint light, and the hair between her legs looked dark. As quickly and silently as she entered the water she slipped up the rocks, the whiteness of her buttocks a brief flash before his eyes, and out of his sight. He heard them dress. "Be sure you don't drop the rubber or the foil, that's all the old man needs to find and we're dead," he heard Andrea whisper. Foxx heard them kissing and whispering for several minutes longer, then, as quietly as they came, he heard them leave. When they were gone he crept onto platform and spilled Onan's seed.

CHAPTER VIII

Sly Foxx wheeled his truck into the Lakeview Quik Mart and Deli at eight A..M., sharp, and filled up with fifteen dollars of regular. Inside, he paid Bonnie Kerr, the sullen young clerk, with three crumpled, greasy, five dollar bills. She barely looked up at him when he said " Bye, Bonnie," and strode out of the store tipping his hat. He got back in the truck and drove directly across the street to Whitey's Garage, and into one of the two open bays in the three-bay building.

Foxx walked into the office and stood in front of the counter. Whitey Gresham was talking on the phone, the receiver jammed between his shoulder and his ear, and with grease-stained fingers was leafing rapidly through a parts catalogue. " No I need the whole axle for that eighty Jimmy," he said. "My customer is coming in later today, and you guys promised me it would be here yesterday. This guy is a good customer, and his camp is forty miles away. He isn't gonna be very pleased if it isn't here...No I can't call him, this isn't Bangor for Christ Sakes...Just get it here, I don't care if it is a special trip. If it isn't here, I'm done with you guys. I ordered this two weeks ago and three times you've left it off the truck...No, I can't send somebody down, I'm all alone here this morning. Get it here." Whitey put the phone down and muttered, "Stupid bastards."

Gresham looked up at Foxx as if to say, "what else can go wrong?" Whitey strongly disliked Foxx, who was a good customer, save for his coming unannounced, and expecting immediate service. He was never rude, but never took no for an answer. Foxx spoke first. "See you're busy Whitey, but I gotta hell of a noise I can't

pinpoint, in the front end. Just started as I was comin' in this mornin'. I'd be obliged if you could look at it today."

"Earliest I can is this afternoon. My boy has his Navy physical this morning in Bangor, and Eddie had to take his wife to Dover for a Physical Therapy appointment."

Foxx said nothing. He stared blankly at Gresham. After a pause Whitey said, "I'll put her up and take a quick look. That's all I can do."

"I appreciate it," Foxx said with a moronic grin.

Whitey put the truck up on the lift, and over the whine of the motor called out to Foxx, "Which side, Sly?"

"Driver's... I think"

Whitey walked over and tugged at the wheel and spun it. He pulled on the axle. He wiped his hands on a rag from his back pocket and looked Foxx in the eye. "What'd ya hit?"

"Nothin' I recall."

"Well you hit something, and you've got problems. Tie rod's bent, CV joint is broken, the alignment is likely way out--did she shimmy?" he asked

"Some--but only over forty-five."

Whitey looked down at his hand and picked at a metal sliver that had been coming to the surface for several days. "Here's the skinny", he began, I can likely get the parts today, probably fix it by Wednesday--Thursday for sure, and you're looking at at least several hundred--more if the axle has to be replaced."

"Guess I'm stuck. Guess I'll just go camping and do some wolf hunting 'til then. I got my gear in the truck."

"Wolf hunting?" Whitey said incredulously.

"Well, wolf tracking--can't hunt 'em. There's one around my place--big fella, too. Heard him three nights running and he killed a deer and dragged it a long ways."

"Well happy hunting, Sly--I can get Alice to give you a lift somewhere."

"I'll be back Thursday morning, first thing. I'll find out what I owe and I'll go down the bank and get you cash."

Whitey lowered the truck down and Foxx fished his knapsack and gear out of the bed. He put the sweat-stained knapsack on in the cool shade of the garage, turned on his heels, tipped his hat to Whitey and walked back across the street to the Deli.

Bonnie noted Foxx's return with annoyance. She hated conversation and knew him to be given to rambling stories and questions. He spent a few minutes shopping and came to the counter. He had two tins of tuna, a loaf of white bread, a small jar of mustard, a *Moosehead Messenger*, and three pornographic magazines. Bonnie thought the magazines might be a test. She shuddered at having to pick the magazines up to scan. Local boys would come in to buy condoms, and on a dare ask her if they came in extra-large, to see if they could get a rise. Bonnie had long learned to ignore such immature behavior.

Foxx often bought magazines, and, after paying for them, would linger by the counter if the store wasn't busy, to see if Bonnie, or Amanda Charles, or any of the female clerks would react. They all despised the man. Fox paid with more greasy fives and counted his change slowly and deliberately, twice. He let down his pack and

shoved the purchases into the main body. He looked up at the girl, just nineteen, and said, "Wanna go camping?" in a voice that sounded as if he might think she would say yes.

"Hardly", came the pained response. He tipped his hat and walked out.

Just after noon Foxx stopped his truck where a small creek meets the lake at a place called Bolton's Cove. A logger named Bolton had died there in the eighteen hundreds, and the spot became his for eternity. Many a young kid had been scared witless by the legend of the ghost of Bolton, who it was said would drown children who swam or otherwise made noise in the cove at night. The area was littered with beer cans, and a small clearing nearby was the site of many keg parties. The young kids were kept away by fear, the law stayed away from indifference. Cool, foggy, early summer evenings seemed to be the favored time for these gatherings.

For the older kids it was a rite of passage to get drunk and look for the ghost of Bolton. From ice-out until early June the cove and the creek were full of trout. Foxx had camped there a few times just a few hundred yards upstream from the lake. Once he had been awakened by the sound of a party. In the dark he had crept stealthily down the path in hopes of glimpsing some skinny dippers. The parties were all young boys, and they weren't all locals. Foxx decided to try and scare the kids away. He had come down hollering in a wild eerie falsetto voice, out of the woods and into the shadows of the fire. Instead of fleeing they ran after him. They were younger and swifter, and they nearly caught him. He was forced to hide under a deadfall. One of the boys nearly stepped on his hand. They stopped searching for him

after awhile. "Old fuckin' faggot probbly", one of them had muttered in disgust. Foxx had lain still for hours, until it was nearly dawn and last the boys drove off.

Foxx ate a sandwich of tuna, mustard, and bread, and drank from the cold creek, a half mile up from the lake. With his fingers he fished the tuna from the can, and the fish that he did not put on his bread he ate with his hands. He rinsed his knife in the stream and wiped it on his pants. He was in country he knew well, country he had hunted with his father. The mountainside was full of big deer, ridge-runners his father called them.

Twenty-years before there had been a small clearing, now overgrown, where a farm had once been. There had been several apple trees in the dooryard and in the clearing. In early fall when he and his father would begin stalking the deer and looking for signs, bees hummed and wallowed in the drops, and the clearing had a winelike fragrance. Sometimes they would find sweet, ripe, apples warm in the sun, and warm to the taste, some variety or hybrid the old farmer had grafted together from his hardiest trees. Once Leo and his father had watched two moose at the rut in the clearing, and once had snuck up on a bobcat stretching lazily in the sun atop a crumbling stone foundation.

In that time there was deep cellar hole , probably once an ice house, and when the Foxxes took an extra deer, something they did every year, they stashed what they did not keep in that hole for the scavengers and mice. The last time Foxx had been to the clearing the hole had caved in. He recalled with a strangely muted fear his first trip into the dark hole. His father lit a match, and the flames reflected off the dark rocks and dreeping humus, wild shadows jumped and leaped in the darkness. Mice

scuttled into the recesses of the rock. Young Leo had shuddered and his father had made light of his fear. "Jesus, Leo, it's only some little mice."

"I ain't scared."

"Don't say ain't. Don't sound ignorant."

"I am not scared."

Foxx walked toward the clearing where he knew he would find the trail toward Oven Rock. The area was rocky, piles of scree beneath the mountain's highest ridges, boulders at the end of the glacial field, and gray, lichen-covered rocks, weathered and cracked, allowing only scrubby growth, except along the immediate creek shore. It was perfect deer country, plenty of browse with enough cover, and plenty of water.

Foxx walked up along the creek. He saw the fresh remains of a red squirrel, likely killed by a pine marten, and a bit of moose antler, mostly gnawed away by mice, lying on a flat rock under a large white pine whose roots hung over the creek bank. When he reached the clearing, or where the clearing had been, he almost stumbled into the dark cellar hole. He realized he had been away for at least fifteen years.

At the base of a gnarled, grey-barked apple tree, with two large hollows, was a pile of porcupine scat. Foxx looked closely and saw the claw marks of a fisher, later on he saw the quills and fly-ridden remains of the dead porcupine. His father had always told him to never kill a fisher, because any animal tough enough to kill a porcupine should be left alone. He wanted to linger in this place of his youth, to remember more things about it, to hear his father's calm voice, and remember his

teaching, but he wanted to find the wolf's den, and he was sure Oven Rock was the place. Were Foxx a wolf, he thought, he would live there. Foxx paused only briefly to listen to the rising breeze in the dark trees.

By nightfall Foxx was well up the western side of Blackely Mountain, about eight miles from Oven rock. By walking directly over the ridge he would be within two miles of Seemonus by noon the next day. He made camp in a small mossy clearing and in the last light of the day he read his magazines. When he could no longer read he studied the pictures in the dark. Then he rested with his back to a tree and dreamed of Andrea Strang, in the darkness at Mary's Point, a long time ago.

CHAPTER IX

Foxx woke up with rain in his eyes before the first light hit the ridge. It was a soft rain, and he had been shielded from it for some time by the large white pine he slept beneath. He scrambled up and took his poncho from the pack. He quickly stuffed his bedroll inside and huddled, without a fire, in his poncho under the tree. The rain was soft, at times no more than a mist, and Foxx stayed dry. He hated hiking in wet clothes, despising most the chafing of his scrotum. He usually had several pair of underwear and a spare T-shirt with him, but he had not expected the problem with the truck. Foxx cursed his growing ineffectiveness, his tendency to forget details, and resolved to get his life back on track. He cursed himself aloud for not listening closely to the weather report on the truck radio. He seemed to be becoming forgetful.

Foxx sat on his haunches, his pack beneath him and sheltered from the rain. Though his eyes quickly became adjusted to the light, he did not stir until the full dawn had come somberly upon the ridge.

Foxx rose stiffly and hoisted the sweat-stained canvas pack and frame to his back. He hoped it would not rain hard, and wished he had bought a newer, lighter, pack, a synthetic one that could shed water, one that would not grow heavy and soggy with the moisture. He was hungry but did not eat. If a downpour came he would have to find shelter. He resolved to strike out in the mist. The mist and the changes to the ridge in the years he had been away troubled him.

In the years since the ridge had been cut, a diverse forest of deciduous and coniferous trees had sprung up, and the landscape looked both unfamiliar and foreboding. In full light he knew he would have no trouble finding the trail. Below him the mountain was wrapped in a dense, smoky fog, and the ridge was windless. He climbed up along the ridge toward the the tarn the stony creek emptied. He could see only fifty yards ahead of him at any time, and he moved slowly through the wet, scrubby, brush and the dead branches of the pines that overhung the creek. The drizzle ceased. The creek rapidly thinned until it was but a small dark ribbon, a few feet wide, and choked with stones. Slowly, Foxx got above the fog and could see far to the east, part of the lake reflecting the rising sun. The sky above him thinned into a grainy grey, darkened in patches by heavier rain-laden clouds, moving slowly above him from the west. He found the trail and was surprised to find a small wooden bridge across the creek.

A large metal disk, adorned with a picture of a snow machine and an arrow pointing north, was nailed to a post before the bridge. The path was worn and smooth, much more traveled than he remembered. As he crested the ridge a breeze found him and the sun nearly burned away the clouds.

It was very muggy and sweat ran down his back from his saturated shirt into the crack of his buttocks. He felt himself begin to chafe and pulled at his pants and shorts, trying to remove the cloth from contacting his skin. He was soon heavy-legged and tired, and deer flies began to swarm around his head.

Weary, Foxx stopped and sat on a deadfall, and ate the second tin of tuna and drank deeply from his canteen. A deerfly bit him on his cheek just below his eye. He

flicked a shard of wood from the log with his knife, fashioned a tooth pick and cleaned his teeth. As he scoured the cracks between his teeth, he remembered his first pocketknife, a black, faux-bone, three-bladed model, called a Junior Woodsman. Foxx had lovingly kept the knife for years, even when the large blade had broken off on a can lid, and the can opener had lost its edge, and the small blade had been honed into a tiny sliver of its original size. The knife sat on a small shelf next to a photograph of his father, above the stove in his camp. Foxx threw little away.

He looked out at the lake, the southern bays now completely visible to him, and saw boats--some trolling, some anchored--and watched the cars and log trucks wind up the highway between Nargate and Jackman. He thought about Andrea Strang. He thought about the wolf. He remembered an old *Field and Stream* that used to languish in the outhouse, that had a story about wolves in Minnesota, and he suddenly recalled that they tended to pack up in winter. He remembered something about breeding pairs going off by themselves in the warm months and regurgitating food to their pups. He wondered why he had not remembered this before.

Perhaps, Foxx thought, he would find the den. There might be pups and a female. Even so a wolf could not drag a deer two miles up hill in rough country. Maybe going to Oven Rock was a stupid idea. He had heard the wolf in the night, and its howl had come from up on the mountain. He only thought the howl had come from Oven Rock. He could not be sure. For a moment he was almost afraid. He wondered if the wolf were watching him as he ate. He whistled to himself.

Leo's thoughts returned to Andrea. A red squirrel chattered at him from a branch of a dark wet pine. He wondered if she was a real blonde, or if she dyed her

hair. He wondered if she ever thought of him, in any way, when she did not see him face to face. He crushed the empty tin and put it under a rock, washed his hands with some water caught in the depression of a large stone, and prepared to resume his hike. Insect larvae squirmed in the mossy water, and Foxx violently ground the flat of his hand into the stone, and swept all the moisture from the rock. "Goddamned bugs!" he said, louder than he meant to. His voice echoed faintly in the high valley.

Before lifting the old pack to his back, he adjusted his pants, retucked his shirt, urinated, belched loudly, and retied his left boot. Slowly he lifted up the pack, shook his shoulders to balance off the load, slung his rifle over his right shoulder and went back up the trail.

He had gone only a few hundred feet when the trail forked. A large pressure-treated post bore another snow machine sign directing the sleds down the ridge away from the path to Oven Rock. The other path was overgrown and the rocks slick with moss and rain. The canopy would not be penetrated by the sun when the leaves were full. In early June the diffused light cast no shadows on the stones and roots in the path. Twice Foxx nearly fell on a steep section of the trail. He took his rifle from his shoulder and carried it in his hand. He was sweating from the exertion, the mugginess and the agitation he felt welling in him like rising bile. Foxx knew he was near the point in the ridge called the saddle, where the ridge line swooped steeply down for two hundred feet, then ran flat for a quarter of a mile, then dramatically up again to the bare outcropping above Oven Rock.

Oven Rock had been important, perhaps sacred, to the native people of the area. It was a place in the cliff where a natural chimney rose from a large flat rock.

Fires had been lit in the opening for hundreds or, perhaps, thousands of years. It was nearly impossible to climb to, and every so often, once every five years or so, wardens would have to rescue someone who tried. The site had been isolated by two huge slides, caused by overcutting on the ridge in the nineteen-twenties. It was accessible from below, but there was no entrance to the trail on public land. Fearing liability, the paper company had a year-round guarded checkpoint on the only road in. Still, some fool with more brass than brains, would try to scale the loose scree and gravel, unaware of the incredible steepness of the slides. Sometimes dramatic rescues had to be made by helicopter. Once the fool was deemed to be safe and unhurt they were taken to the jail in Dover. Foxx knew he would have no trouble getting close to the rock by the overgrown trail, but knew he could not even begin to reach the rock across the slide.

An old tote road ascended the back side of the ridge, and by way of a tortuous path reached the back side of the outcropping. A four-legged animal could easily reach the flatrock, and have a sentry's view of several hundred square miles of Maine and Canada. The area had enough food: rabbits, moose, deer, mice, and partridge, to support a family of wolves.

Foxx did not intend to reach the rock, only a point on the trail before the ridge fell away, where he could train his field glasses on the rock. As he neared the peak on the ridge, just before it sloped away, he stopped to gain his breath. His scrotum was chafed and his head itched violently. He could smell his redolent armpits, and feel his greasy hair stuck to his neck. He took a drink from his canteen, and when he felt his exhalations slow and slacken, he crept slowly forward. He came to the ravine where

the ridge dropped and eased off his pack, put down his gun, his back rubbed by the frame and irritated by the sweat, took off his shirt, and felt a light wind on his steamy flesh. He found his field glasses and dropped to his knees in a mossy spot near the edge of the ravine. He could see the outcropping and Oven Rock.

Foxx focused the glasses and scanned the rock. He saw no sign of the wolf. He searched slowly and meticulously like an art dealer scanning a painting for signs of forgery. He looked into the opening of the rock and into the chimney hole, as the locals called it. It was empty. The breeze strengthened and the trees spit rain drops on him. A deer fly bit him on the back and he nearly lost his balance reaching back to kill it. He sat up from his kneeling position and put his soggy shirt back on.

Foxx swung the glasses out over the mountains, across the snowy summits of Katahdin, across the broad sweep of the Lobster Mountains, and over into Quebec. He sat back down and ate the last of the loaf of bread, smearing the hardening slices with mustard. He ate slowly and pensively, chewing the bread until it dissolved in his saliva.

Foxx picked up his glasses again and scanned the rock. Again he saw nothing. Then he scanned the slide on the far side of the rock, and there, with a rabbit in his mouth, trotted the wolf. He was the one he had seen in April, almost brindle in color, and fairly young. He trotted quickly across a narrow spot in the slide, jumping the detritus, one large rock to another, with grace and power. Foxx saw him for only a few moments then the wolf disappeared from view. Foxx scanned the rock for fifteen minutes without rest, his heart pounding, his mind oblivious to the insects which

swarmed around his head and neck and took his blood in long sips, leaving welts on his dirty skin.

"The den must be on the back side of the rock. Clever bastard he is," Foxx said aloud. "Smart bastard he is, he can see everything." He saw no more of, and heard no sound from, the majestic animal. Foxx was tired and the sun hung over him, past the point of noon. He had miles to go to get to his camp, and he would have to retrace his steps to where the trail left the snow machine trail, to find his way down to the lake shore. From there he would strike the Seemonus road four or five miles below the village, and well after the checkpoint. Carrying his rifle, he knew, meant he was unlikely to get a ride unless it was from someone he knew, and he knew fewer people all the time. With reluctance he hoisted his pack and rifle to his shoulders and began down the trail in the company of a thousand whining, biting bugs.

Foxx reached the Seemonus Road at a few minutes after four. He emerged from the woods where St. Jean's Brook flows under the road, and into Muskatus Bog. He paused to watch some small trout pick at bugs in the water, their rise ripples quickly erased by the flow. He scuttled down to the water's edge and took off his shirt and hat. He stuck his head into the icy black water and held it under for a brief second, his breath leaving his lungs, and his ears and eyes aching from the cold. He came up sputtering, and splashed his armpits and chest with the icy water. He slapped his bite swollen face with fistfuls of the bracing stream.

It had become sunny, and he sat down in the grass, spreading his sweat-soaked shirt on the ground. He took out his pack rod and tied a crudely fashioned mosquito to the end of his tippet. He quickly caught five small brookies, all just legal

length, and stream-cleaned them. He tore off several large pieces of bark from a birch leaning over the stream and wrapped the fish in them, after soaking the bark in the stream, holding it under the water until his fingers were nearly numb. He put on his shirt and gear and began to slog the last weary miles homeward.

As he walked in the dust of the road's edge he was alone. He knew that most of the log trucks would have left for the mills by three, and Tuesday was not a day many tourists came in or out of the campgrounds. He did not expect much traffic and he walked almost in the road, whenever he came to a place still oozing up the winter's water, or he came across a spot where a beaver pond leaked out of the woods. He walked with his hands in his pockets trying to hold his sweat-soaked pants and underwear away from his raw crotch. He thought about Andrea and he thought about the wolf. The wolf intrigued him and Andrea vexed him. She had once been so kind to him, the butterscotch pudding and the doughnuts, and the times she had invited him to take part in games they all played, and the time the cousins had made up a play.

It had been rainy for almost a week and everyone had been to town, and stocked up on comic books and decks of cards, and they had played all the games they knew, and the adults had banished them from the main house, so Andrea and her sisters had made up a play. It was to be performed on a Saturday afternoon, and Andrea had asked Junior to play the part of a huntsman, who would help a prince rescue a fair Damsel, played by Andrea, from the clutches of a group of evil fairies who were half human and half bear.

Costumes and scenery had been made, and a small platform had been built in the boys' bunkhouse, with a blue tarp stretched on a piece of wire for a curtain. Junior

had wanted to be in the play, but his father had to take him with him to Dover to buy a new truck. Andrea had pleaded with Leo to let the boy stay, but the trip was to be overnight and to include a visit to Junior's cousins in Lewiston. The boy had shyly told Andrea he thanked her for asking him, but he could not be in her play. Recalling the play, and Andrea's temper tantrums, he felt a deep shame spread over him like a fever.

As Foxx trudged on he wondered if the play had been any good. He could not remember ever being told about it. He grew very tired and wanted to rest, but he knew he would struggle to start again if he stopped. A two-door Jimmy passed him, a pretty young woman with a dark pony tail driving, with Pennsylvania tags. Foxx wondered how many rich people there were in Philadelphia, and he wondered if the driver was going to Mary's Point.

CHAPTER X

Summer sat on her porch sipping the watery remains of a gin and tonic in the late afternoon light, pleased with herself. Rising early, she written most of the day, and completed the rough draft of a story crafted from the notes of *Lobo*. It was set where she and Dorian had honeymooned in the Boundary Waters of Minnesota. The distant sound of the lake's waves had recalled for her the soft gurgle the swirling water made as she and Dorian paddled the placid blue lakes and streams. The smell of their campfires was remembered in the ashes of the woodstove. The far distant hum of fire patrol planes recalled for her the gut-tightening descent into the remote lake where they began their journey. Looking up from her typewriter, Summer had noticed three small clusters of wildflowers bound together with small twist ties, hanging from small pieces of fishing tippet, in front of the window by the sink. These drying flowers recalled for her the samples Dorian had gathered on their trip, and painstakingly bundled and labeled, before placing them safely into a small pack.

The whine of a mosquito had brought back a short terrifying slog across a muddy portage through a bog, where the air was dark with millions of droning and biting mosquitos, whose savage assault had left them both scratching for days. As Summer looked up to find the whining bug she noticed a spider's web in the peak of the ceiling. The web rippled as the breeze off the lake came through the windows, and she remembered the lodge where they had spent their final night in Minnesota in an airy, dark tongue and groove room on the top floor. They made love, for the first time in two weeks in a bed, opening up each other's bite scabs in their passion and leaving

trails of dark blood on the sheets. They had often laughed as they wondered what the chambermaids must have thought when they came to strip the bed.

Summer had eaten a large salad, exhausting the last of her fresh greens, and cooked a small steak on the grill. She was feeling overly full, and patted her stomach and yawned. She smiled at the lake, nearly calm and reflecting the mountains and their snowy summits in near perfect detail. The light was blue-tinged and cool. A soft breeze, enough to keep down the bugs, blew from the northwest, and the earth smelled raw and fecund.

At noon, Summer had gone to the store and Lydia had given her a postcard with a picture of Mount Rainier. It was from her old college friend, Norma, who had gone to Seattle to escape a nasty divorce and marriage. Richie, the ex-husband, had been Summer's lover before she had met Dorian. He was a handsome, vacuous, old-money, Bostonian via Deerfield, who was looking for a mother and a whore in one woman. Norma had fallen hard for him, or at least hard for the luxuries of his wealth, and his handsomeness; enduring infidelity, drunkenness, cocaine binges, and periods of abject abandonment, for almost seven years until she could take no more. She had become bitter, resentful of all men, and was trying desperately to find one to minister to her loneliness. Summer always felt that, in some unspoken way, Norma blamed her for her troubles. Norma did not write without mentioning Richie, and often asked Summer about her own times with him. Summer was glad Norma lived so far away, wondered at the inability of so many of her friends to be contented by their situations. She felt a sudden pang of want, a brief but brutal desire to be with Dorian.

Summer sighed and penned a return card to her old friend, vowing to write a letter when time permitted. A smile creased her face as she thought of her own reliable mate.

She had just finished writing, "loveya, Sum" when she heard the rhythmic clatter of Foxx's canteen and cookkit as he labored up the road. The tins banged against the pack frame sounding like an old time peddler's wagon on a bumpy road. His head was bowed, and he more trudged than walked. He was filthy and bent and laboring along using a walking stick, a piece of a maple sapling he had cut, and did not look up as he passed her cabin. She at once held her breath, and sat stock still in her chair, hoping he would not see her, and had a frightening desire to ask him if he was ill. His skin was yellowed and covered with the dust of the road. He walked uncommonly bow-legged. He stumbled, caught himself and looked up as if to see where he was. He stopped and tried to straighten up, his fist in the small of his back. He looked old and worn. Summer could not be sure if he saw her and she was afraid not to speak. "Mr. Foxx are you ill"? she asked timidly.

"Oh hello Summer", he said removing his darkly-stained hat, "I'm just tired. I had to leave my truck in town yesterday and I just got back here." He paused. She could not speak. "Ain't young as I was. I came over the ridge, camped last night." He paused again as if to swallow something. Then he turned toward her and said, "I must get along.", and he waved his hat and put it back on his head. "Good to be home", he croaked turning back toward his camp and walking again. He stopped suddenly as if seized by a great thought. "I did see the wolf and I know where the den is."

"You saw the wolf"? she blurted out without knowing at first she had spoken.

"Yep. He's up where I thought he would be. Only saw him for a bit. He had a rabbit and he was headed to his den, I suppose, I suspect--must be pups and a bitch up there's well. Couldn't get no closer, but he's the one I seen last April--sort of reddish. I'd guess he killed that deer before them pups was weaned and he'll stay close to home 'til winter when they'll get back with a pack again." He staggered a little in the road, shifting his weight from one leg to the other. He turned, waved his hat, and limped along toward the tote road and his camp.

Summer stood on the porch and watched him walk away, afraid he might crumple and fall, afraid she might be compelled to help him in some way. What if he had a heart attack and she had to give him CPR? She shuddered at the image and scolded herself for her cruelty. She thought of Norma and Richie, and wondered how people let their lives get so wearisome and complicated. She thought of the enormity of Foxx's trek, and felt a moment of pity for him, a pity which yielded to a fear deep in her bowels.

Shivering, Summer took her glass inside the cabin, and made another drink, weak and full of chunks of lime, like the first. She looked at the mouse traps on the counter. She had trapped three in the night, and had disposed of them back by the edge of the woods, using the blade of a broken butter knife to open the clamped jaws and release the stiffening bodies. She wondered if she should set them again, but decided to let Dorian do that. She had killed three, and disposed of them. He would be surprised by that. Though she was sated from her dinner she craved something sweet, ice cream or a frozen candy bar. It was not her custom to eat dessert, or to

crave sweets. It annoyed her to crave anything. She wondered if she just wanted someone other than Foxx to speak too.

Summer sat at the table and sipped her drink. She looked at the postcard and its picture of Mount Rainier. Norma's last postcard had been a picture of the Space Needle in Seattle. She resolved to visit the Northwest some day. She thought about a long, brisk walk, then a swim, and settled for a short walk to the store. She did not move.

Summer sat looking at the mountains and the grey-blue surface of the lake and finished her drink. She felt the barest glow from the gin, an elation without fatigue or drunkenness. The incipient evening's languor settled over her like a warm shawl. Aloud she said, as she pushed herself up and out of her chair, "It's now or never, Summer."

As Summer approached the store she could hear the sounds of dinner from the Graysons' house, clinking forks and the refrigerator closing, and decided to walk on toward the campground and not disturb the meal. She was wearing flip-flops, and wished she had worn sneakers, and she wondered if she should go back and change. She walked a few hundred yards more and, while she walked, pondering going back, she stubbed a toe and decided to return to the camp and change shoes.

Approaching the store again, Summer saw Foxx, still in the filthy clothes he had worn when she spoke to him, on the porch knocking on the door and carrying a small propane tank in his hand. She was annoyed. She wanted to go to the store. She wanted to go home, and either way she would have to pass Foxx. Mr. Grayson came out onto the porch and he and Foxx walked around to the back where the big propane

tank was. Summer walked as quickly as she dared past the store, her head down, her flip-flops smacking noisily on the road. Her heart pounded and she felt a palpable terror. When she reached her porch she looked back along the road and saw no one. She was panting and flushed. Taking a dry towel from the railing she went to the shower and let the cool water run over her body and she scrubbed her self pink.

CHAPTER XI

The pensive and tenuous calm at Mary's Point lingered until Tuesday. That morning Will and his father had both risen early to fish. Will had gone to the river and his father had taken his big boat out into the lake. He had gone out to Bear Island, three miles down the lake in the mist of the pre-dawn. Andrea slept the sleep of one who has had too much wine. She had awakened in the night to urinate and felt dry mouthed. Her head ached slightly and she had taken some aspirin with several glasses of water. She did not hear George leave, or feel the bed rise and bend as he arose.

Will caught several fish and had seen a large cow moose wading downstream from him. A family of otters had frolicked and fed in the fast water below the rips at the dam. He was content, but yet uneasy, sure the fragile, forced, calm, could not last. He tried to anticipate what his father, or his mother, would say to annoy him, and tried to steel himself to ignore, or laugh away their insult. He knew that if he could keep calm and not rise to the bait, he might be able to stay at camp in relative peace until he had to leave for Boston.

Boston College, he knew, would draw some insult. His father was a bigoted man, and Catholics, particularly Irish Catholics, were one of his favorite targets. Will could not simply leave without some explanation of his going. If he did that would precipitate a fight with his mother, who would accuse him of not wanting to see her. If he said it was an interview a suffocating barage of questions would be thrown at him. Will marveled at the duration of this war. He wanted to understand his father's anger, for, he thought, if he could understand it, he might be able to forgive it.

George and Andrea would dig and push for all the details, asking about tenure tracks and compensation, benefits and the like. George would sneer at his taking a one year position, and tell him that he was walking down a blind alley, and that he would be so good at law. Andrea would say, "Oh Will. It's so difficult moving around all the time, so hard to have a real life."

Will would try to remain calm and aloof, without appearing haughty and argumentative. He would tell them that he had other interviews, tell them the Middlebury job had the possibility of a tenure track opening, but he would show no lack of faith, or wavering in his belief. His father could smell that kind of equivocation, and he would be emboldened, poised to sink his fangs into a weakened prey.

When George Strang tasted blood in the water he became especially vicious. His viciousness was a clear-headed, cold, and ordered hatred. Andrea only got mean when she got drunk. Always given to sarcasm, she became self-pitying and martyred with drink. When her speech became slurred she became almost detached.

Will fished and wrestled with his thoughts as they spun and leaped and twisted in his mind, like the otters splashing in the foam. He knew he was perhaps a few days at best from a fight, only hours at worst, and the only sure thing was that it would come, and he would see it coming and still be unable to avoid it.

When George put the big boat in, he trailered it to the public launch by the campground, and motored back to his mooring, the submerged block of a fifty-nine Ford, that was exactly one-hundred and sixteen feet out from the house, directly off the east end of the porch. He would find it by using a scuba mask, a one-hundred and

twenty foot piece of rope, and the small aluminum row boat. George would tie the rope to the steps leading into the lake and row out to the vicinity of the mooring. There he would anchor the boat and, while leaning over the side of the boat wearing the scuba mask, search the sandy bottom until he found the block sitting on the sand in six to twelve feet of water, depending on the lake level.

The cable and chain attached to the block was painted a bright orange, and George lowered a hook, attached to a coil of stiff wire and fished up the looped chain. When he had the long heavy loop in the boat, he tied the chain to the mooring line with two carabiners.

George attached his buoy to the line and let it overboard. It was a job he did. He had never even asked for help, save the one year he had strained his back playing golf, and only then did he allow Will to help. It had gone badly with George yelling at Will, and Will losing all his dexterity as he tried desperately and nervously to follow his fathers snarling orders.

George put the boat in and had been aboard it nearly all day. Will could not imagine what his father did for the many hours he was out in the boat. He knew that he would start and restart the motor several times at the mooring before actually weighing anchor and going down the bay. Other than that he seemed to polish and rub and caress the boat for hours.

That morning he had rowed out, tied the rowboat to the mooring, put his fishing tackle on board, and stiffly pulled himself on board. He pulled a minnow trap from the water, he had cast over the port side the night before, scooped the minnows into a bait pail, and headed south to Bear Island, where he fished until eight-thirty.

Using his small trolling motor he circumnavigated the island several times, and saw two large schools of fish on his fishfinder. They were much closer to the surface than they would be only a few weeks later when the water began to warm. He caught several togue, all over fourteen inches and tossed them back. He generally only kept salmon and trout. He caught none of those, and returned to camp in a sour mood.

When Will got back he found his mother sitting on the porch drinking coffee in her robe. "I didn't start breakfast because I didn't know when you'd be back.", she said a bit wearily, "and your father is just coming up the bay now. I was watching him with the glasses"

"I'll just have some cereal and toast--I'll get it," Will replied, looking into his mother's tired eyes, the whites streaked with red like old china. For the first time she looked old to Will, old enough to be with his father.

"I don't mind cooking Will", she said as if asking permission to do so.

"I'm fine, maybe Dad will want something. I'm not that hungry right now."

Will was bringing his cereal, coffee and toast to the table, balancing the plate, bowl and mug with the dexterity of a waiter, when his father came in. Will knew by the scowl on his face, and the knitting of his brow, that he was not pleased. Andrea spoke first as George went to the stove to get coffee. "Catch anything darling?" she asked

"Nothin' but goddamned togue--the friggin ice fishermen are screwing up the lake. They take so many damn salmon and trout through the ice, drunken bastards, that all that's left is togue." he abruptly stopped and looked down the lake.

"Well let me fix you some breakfast...."

"Any bagels left?"

"I think so, but they may be getting a little stale, I'll check for..."

"I'll look myself. I'm up." he said sharply

"I don't mind, sit down and relax, I'll fix anything you want."

"A bagel is fine."

Will ate quietly. George suddenly snarled at him, "Catch anything at the river?"

"Yeah a few," he replied in a flat emotionless tone, "Six good salmon and a few small trout, lost the best one,"

Immediately, Will regretted telling the truth. He could see his father color and see that he was thinking about what to say next, he was calculating a move, not simply conversing anymore. Andrea scuttled out to the kitchen and took the waxed bag of bagels out of the bread box. "Pumpernickel, George, or Poppy Seed?" she called sweetly to him.

"Poppy Seed with butter, toasted", he said in clipped sharp tones. Then turning to Will with a sneer on his lips he said, "Keep any?"

"I'm not like the ice-fishermen Dad, I only keep one now and then. You're right about the lake, it's overfished-especially in the winter," he said agreeably.

"Of course I'm right, I'm right about a lot of things." he said.

Will said nothing. He was determined not to react. No matter how withering the attack he was willing to try to remain calm, if not passive. Neither spoke.

Will ate quietly and his mother brought George his bagel and more coffee. She sat down next to her husband and kissed the top of his head, and patted his thigh,

giving him a squeeze on the inner part, near his groin. "Will", she said, "Are you going back to the river this afternoon?"

"Actually I was thinking about going into Nargate. I have to make some calls, mail a few letters..."

George interrupted, "Use the car phone, it works up here now. Expensive as that is it's cheaper than driving all the way into Nargate. Besides you can mail letters at Grayson's"

"I have to send some papers back to Professor Rankin, and I need to send them registered mail, I think for expediency I should do that in Nargate. Need anything at the store Mom?", he asked, again pleasantly and calmly.

" Well honey some fresh greens and some fresh bagels or English muffins would be nice. I can make a list." she answered

"Need anything Dad?" Will asked with a hint of victory in his voice, feeling round three go to him.

"Just some damn peace and quiet!" his father yelled getting up from the table. "You just aren't very organized Will. If you had papers to mail you should have gotten a priority mail envelope on the way in, then left it with Lydia."

Though anger and resentment welled in him, Will simply answered in a firm voice, "You're right Dad, that would have saved me a trip. Well I'm going to wash up and get started so I can get back late this afternoon. I won't forget the list Mom." Will turned quickly from the table so his father would not see his smirk. He bounded into the kitchen, quickly washed his hands, and went upstairs to changed-flushed in his victory.

When Will came down his father was gone from the porch. His mother handed him a list of things to buy and a fifty dollar bill. "Gee, I hardly need this much Mom, " Will said.

" Keep the change, I know how hard you worked to get camp ready, and I appreciate you not fighting with your father. He's been under a lot of strain lately. He's got the middle-aged blues."

"He's not that old, and he's too stubborn not to live to a hundred."

" I tell him that all the time, but well....you don't tell him much....anyway take this," she said shoving the fifty into his shirt pocket, "Please for me."

" I've got money Mom."

" I know, but just keep it. I used to always give you a little extra money to go to town when you were little so please let me do it now." She pushed the money into his hand and patted the top of his head, just like she had when he went to school as a boy.

Will went down the steps to the lawn and turned toward his car. His father called to him from the boathouse, "Get twenty feet of cotton line, half inch, at Manley's"

"Sure Dad, anything else?"

"No just the line. Make sure it's cotton, nothing synthetic."

"Will do," Will called almost cheerily as he walked away. He felt dominant, he felt the old man weakening, the alpha male was on the wane.

Andrea washed the breakfast dishes, went to the bedroom and fluttered a sundress over her nakedness and went out to the boathouse. George was arranging tools on his work bench. She knew he heard her coming because she had been humming. She came up behind him and put her arms around his waist. "I remember a few interesting evenings and afternoons out here. Do you?" George did not reply, he just grunted. Andrea slipped a hand inside his polo shirt and rubbed his chest. "I used to come out here when you were bunked upstairs, and I would leave my panties in my room and we'd have a quickie just before lunch, " she crooned as she guided his hand to her naked thigh. He put down his tools and turned toward her. She had wanted to make love the night before, but he had fallen quickly asleep. She kissed him and put her hand on his crotch seeking his fly.

"I think we should go inside Andrea", he said trying to slip from her arms.

"No here," she said and stood back pulling her dress over her head in a windy motion. She stood naked and tanned before him, showing little of the ravages of aging, her legs still strong, free of cellulite, and her breasts still rose tipped and sagging only a little. She had no lines in her neck and just the incipient cracks of crows feet and weathering from the sun, on her forehead and around her eyes. George almost smiled. She loosened his belt and opened his fly, pushing his cargo shorts down and sinking to her knees.

"Jesus Andrea, let's go into the bedroom," he said without conviction. She took him deeper and with exuberance. He braced himself back against the workbench and stepped out of his shorts, his briefs still tangled around his feet. Andrea stopped and kissed his thighs and then just the tip of his erection. She reached down and freed

his briefs from his ankles and he stepped out of his boat shoes. He had begun to get a paunch, not a belly, but a soft curve of fat, she kissed him there and stood up. She held his penis in her hand and kissed him. She turned toward the wall and bent over grabbing a brace between the exposed studs. She walked back to make it possible for him to enter her.

He looked at her brown ass, womanly and wide and entered her wetness easily. She moved with the full sumptuous beauty of a Kentucky thoroughbred mare. With his hands on her hips he began to stroke slowly. The warmth of her vagina surprised him, it was almost too warm, and very wet. She pushed back against him with uncommon effort and he felt his orgasm coming quickly. He stopped moving to prolong it and she pushed furiously against him.

George was overcome with a desire to take her in her anus, but he knew she would not allow him there anymore, though when she was young she would, if he was slow and patient in stretching her and lubricating her. She began to quicken her pace and he thought she might reach a climax, something she rarely did except when he gave her oral stimulation, or she was on top. He could not be still any longer and began to buck quickly. Her arms strained against the brace and she felt her release come hard and full. She became faint and he nearly pushed her into the wall when he came.

They both staggered, and he gripped her hard around the waist. She stood up a bit and held the wall as if manacled to it. They were both panting--he harder than she. His calf cramped and he pulled away abruptly. Andrea turned around and leaned heavily against the wall. George grabbed two clean hand towels from shelf above his

dry sink. He handed one to Andrea who stood flushed and naked before him. She wiped his sperm from between her legs, and bent down to get her dress. She slipped it back over her head. George dressed and looked at his wife as if he had not seen her before.

In his wife's womanness he saw the Swedish girl who had worked for them, who he had an affair with, and over whom Andrea had nearly left him. His wife was softer and fuller and more appealing to him than she had been in some time. He almost went to her and kissed her. He thought about lifting her dress and pressing his lips to her and finding her sex, and bringing her to a climax again, and for a moment he believed he loved her as he had when they were both young.

She lifted her dress and wiped herself again. Though he was spent, he was aroused by the sight of her pubic hair, a darker blond than her sun-brightened hair, and thicker and wilder than in her youth when she kept it bikini-trimmed. Once she had shaved it completely for him when he had asked her to, but the regrowing itched, and the razor had irritated her. Now he preferred the darker tangle. He felt his penis leak fluid into his briefs.

Andrea sat down on a large old surplus ammunition box, the towel folded on her lap. George stood quietly, leaning back against the workbench, resisting the ebbing of his agitation and feeling restive. He was still irritated, as if he had a project unfinished, as if his anger was unvented. He did not hate his son, only his choices, only his independence, only his unwillingness to pursue something of value. He would someday inherit his own wealth, but he would not add to it, not build on his father's work, but instead simply be a teacher, an almost idle man. If only his son

could see the value in hard work. If only he could understand the need to add to a fortune, to not squander all of the things George had made for the three of them.

Andrea, still sitting on the ammunition box, leaning slightly forward, listened to the waves lap at the rocks. She heard a kingfisher and a loon. Through the window she saw the first leaves of a birch tree turning over to silver in the breeze. She remembered George, bold and insatiable, inventive and almost light-hearted as a young lover. She had always loved sex and touching and closeness, and at times he had given it to her, and when he had, for prolonged periods ignored her, other men, and once a woman had taken his place. She did not feel chained to him, and she was not afraid to be alone, but she preferred to be with him, to remember, and sometimes relive, the passion of her youth. They had made love in the boathouse, in the lake, in the woods across the lake when they went to pick berries, on the tent platform, in the back of station wagons in the early hours of the morning, all away from the prying and mistrustful eyes of her parents and aunts and uncles.

Once they had made love on the float on a cool and dark night in the fog. After a long silence Andrea stood up, stretched her back and said, "I think I'll read in the sun. Maybe I'll get hot enough for a quick dip."

"The water is still awfully cold," he said, not meanly, but with a cautious tone.

"Are you staying here?"

"For a little while. One of my reels needs to be cleaned, and rewound."

Andrea went over to him, stood on her tip-toes and kissed him on the head.

He is a good kid George, it may take him a while to get going, but he is more like you

than you know. He'll make something of himself, and we'll be proud." He did not answer at first.

Then in short measured tones he said, "Jesus he's twenty-six. He better get going."

"He's twenty-four, almost twenty-five. He's the same age you were when you came to work at the firm, and three, almost four, years younger than you were when we got married. Give him time, he loves his work, he's got a nice girl, and he's trying very hard."

"I'll be over in a little while."

Will drove slowly toward town and stopped to fish at the bridge over St. Jean's Stream. He let a few small trout go and then wiping his hands with a packaged towelette, stowed his rod and vest in the back and moved on. He chatted with Mary Everly at the paper company checkpoint, and after passing the gate drove faster toward Nargate. It took him almost an hour to get to the paved road and another half an hour into town. He had hoped that his father would have suggested going by boat which would have saved him time and been more relaxing. With most of the roads dry, free of snow and, graded, the log trucks were flying along, enjoying their perpetual right of way, and leaving clouds of dust behind them.

Will went first to get his father his rope, but neither Manley's or Nargate Hardware had the thickness he wanted. Allan Manley told him that the company no longer made half inch only 3/8ths and 5/8ths. Will bought both and went to the post office where he mailed his papers. They could have been mailed at the Grayson's, but

he wanted to come to town and call Gretchen. He tried her from a phone booth at the Widowmaker Restaurant where he had lunch, but got her machine.

He tried again after he stopped, and still did not reach Gretchen. It was two o'clock when he left the grocery store and put the produce and groceries in his Coleman cooler, along with a bag of ice. He wanted to be back by four. His mood darkened when he did not reach Gretchen a second time. He drove slowly over the dirt road wondering where she might be, and was troubled by the remembrance of his dream, the one where she stood crying on the boardwalk.

At the bridge over the St. Jean stream Will stopped to fish again. His earlier urge to return by four muted by the thought that he would arrive at cocktail hour a potentially incendiary time. In his absence his father would have had time to find fault in some minute detail of Will's camp opening work. He would be on the offensive, and if his mother had begun early on her wine, he would need all the resolve he could muster to avoid a nasty argument.

Standing over the quick dark water and looking into the small pool just below the road, Will saw the glint of small lure snagged on a sodden birch branch. He wondered how anyone could even hope to spincast in such a small stream. He tied on a fresh fly, a small Hendrickson, with a Duncan Loop, and set it down easily on the current to drift.

He missed the first two trout who came to the fly, in maddening succession, but hooked the third. It was a small black and coral bullet breaking the surface and wriggling free of the tiny hook. When the fish shook the hook, Will pulled too quickly on the line and the gossamer tippet and fly twisted up in the wind and around

the new-green tip of a spruce bough. With a surgeon's patience Will unwound the silky tippet, clipped off the fly and the wind-knotted monofilament. He put the fly back in his dry fly box after carefully blowing on it to dry it. He pushed the snarled tippet down into his front pant's pocket.

Will reeled up his line and broke down the rod. He thought about Gretchen and hoped he could use his father's phone to call her. He sat on a shaded and moist boulder, lichenous and slippery, and put his rod into the case. The afternoon light cast shadows through the pines and scraggly birches.

Will rose slowly, as if weighted down by worry. He gathered his gear and walked out of the shadows into the bright sun. A langorous reverie overcame him as he stowed his gear on the back seat. The sun felt almost hot on his face, and a reluctance to move, a quiet inertia, overwhelmed him. Looking down at the road he saw, by the toe of his boot, a small silvery object, which upon examination, proved to be a flattened waterproof container for matches. Will examined it, shading the bright piece from the sun with his hand. Scratched into the soft metal were the letters, S.F. Will stuck it in a small pocket of his vest and drove off.

The high June sun dappled the road with shadow and pools of spreading brilliance. At times Will cursed the pot holes he hit without seeing them, the sun blinding him as it spilled onto his dusty windshield. He slowed his pace and wandered from side to side to avoid the small craters and slick spots where the last frost sap boiled up through the calcified dirt and gravel. The closer he got to camp the darker he felt his mood become. Passing the Grayson's he splashed through a deep puddle, showering his windshield with a faintly red-brown mud. "The old man will

have something to say about that," he said aloud to himself. Turning into the small field where the cars were parked a brief yelp erupted from his throat as he spied the muddy, dust-covered trunk of Gretchen's car parked next to his parent's. Grabbing only the cooler, and the two hanks of rope for his father, Will sprinted ungainly over the causeway toward the mainhouse, the cooler banging against his leg.

The boat was gone, and he was elated that his father would not be present when he first saw Gretchen. He found her and his mother sipping wine on the porch. "Hi Gret! This is a great surprise," then lowering his voice from a nervously adolescent pitch, he asked, "Everything Okay?"

"Sure! It was too hot in Philly and I decided to get away. I was going to visit my sister on the Cape, but once I got to Hartford, I decided to check my messages and there was one for you. The guy from B.C. called and wanted to see you on Thursday. It's a good thing you left him my number as well as yours. He said the position may open up into a tenure track. "

"Damn I should have called him, and the Middlebury people, when I was in town..."

"I have my cell phone, it worked in Nargate."

"My father's works here--I'll try yours."

Andrea broke in, "Aren't you at least going to give Gretchen a hug? She just drove thirteen hours to see you."

Will looked at his mother's face and knew she was not holding her first glass of wine.

Gretchen set her glass down and Will smothered her lithe, sun-browned body in his arms, then kissed her quickly."

"You smell like fish," she told him

"You smell good," he replied. "Let's go call B.C."

Will raced up the stairs to his room and returned with a small rucksack. He fished an address book from the front pocket, took Gretchen by the hand, and started for the door. "Wait--let me get my glass first," Gretchen laughed.

"Okay--I just don't want to miss this guy. It may be too late already."

"He left two numbers and said you could call him up until eleven tonight."

The connection was scratchy and tinny, but Will was able to set up his interviews to begin at two o'clock on Thursday. "Gret... we can either go down tomorrow night and stay in Boston, or leave at five on Thursday morning. You've driven so far today, I'll leave it up to you."

"I don't really care. I am just so glad to be away from Philly--it was so fucking hot! I'll leave it up to you, or we can play it by ear--even go halfway tomorrow and get a motel in Portland or something. Your mother made up your bed fresh. She didn't even mention the bunkhouse."

"Yeah, but she has been in the wine, the old bastard is still out fishing, and he has been trying to provoke a damn fight since he got here. I've been smiling and saying sure Dad, right Dad, should have thought of that Dad. He's gonna make some comment about BC--you know "Bead Mumbler", "Mackeral Smackers" something anti-Catholic, or anti-Irish. It'll take some nerve to ignore him."

Gretchen sidled close to him on the seat. She was wearing a sleeveless knit top and hiking shorts. She had left her sandals on the porch and was tracing a line up Will's right leg with her left foot. "Let's be perfect angels. We'll play leaving by ear. Your Mom has been so sweet, telling me stories about being a kid here, telling me how proud she is of you--and how thankful she is that you have avoided a big fight with your father. Your old man is a selfish prick, but he wins if he gets to you--besides he gives you less shit when I'm around."

"He'll find something. Sometimes he puts my mother down so I'll defend her, and sometimes he puts me down so she'll defend him. It's like this damn rope he wanted from town. He wanted 1/2 inch--they only have it in 3/8th and 5/8th. I got both. I think the whole thing was less than six bucks. He'll have something to say about it--either I should have got neither one, because it wasn't what he wanted, or I should have somehow known--as anyone with a brain would have known--which was the preferable thickness, and to get both was a waste--only the *spoiled* generation does that. He'll find a way to make it an issue. I mean Christ, it's a few bucks, but he'll have it twisted into some fucking problem. He wants everything both ways. He'll say, 'Will you would make a fine lawyer,' in one breath, then say in the next that I am. 'too stupid to find my ass with both hands'. I don't want him to care about me--he only cares about himself, but I do want him to at least appreciate that my mother--for all her faults--is a good person, and that I am not a fucking idiot."

"I know, Will. Look you'll have your degree soon, a job, a beautiful wife who will have her degree soon...seriously we'll be fine. He'll come around."

"Gret. He's never gonna be the avuncular old curmudgeon tossing the grandchildren and grandnieces around on the beach. He's a mean spirited man. Can you imagine what an asshole he'll be about the wedding?"

"We'll elope!"

"Sometimes I wish he'd keel over and go to hell while my mother still has plenty of life in her. He's wearing her down and she's in the sauce earlier each day."

"I know--hang in", she nestled closer to him and lightly kissed his neck, "As I said we'll be fine--you can't fight your mother's battle..."

They sat quietly, the phone on the dash, the windows opened to the late day breeze rushing coolly over the lake and into the field. Will recognized the drone of his father's boat. "Here comes the old man. I suppose we should go greet him," he said sarcastically.

"No. Call Middlebury and see if you can go there on this trip as well. The more I think about it the less I want to see my beloved father-in-law to be when I am this happy."

"Think I should? Might seem a bit cheeky--don't you think?"

"Just tell them you have an interview in Boston, and would be available sooner if that works for them. Might give you a chance to make a first impression before someone else does. Ellie Ferrell is applying for that job too."

"No shit? How do you know?"

"She talks a lot."

"Ellie Ferrell? She is an Americanist. This is an Anglo-Irish position. She's just practicing interviewing. I wonder how she got an interview?"

"She went there undergrad."

"That won't make a difference."

"I don't know--that's why I plan to do something other than teach--too many politics."

"I mean hell the whole world will be applying for that job--guys with tenure at other schools. It is such an incredible long shot for me...It's probably too late to call today anyway-Jesus it's well after five. I'll call tomorrow."

"You do that--after you've gone fishing, made breakfast and awakened me at--oh say--nine, with a fresh cup of coffee and one of the muffins I brought up from home."

"Oh," he said looking up and down her body, "I'll wake you up."

"Down big boy--the whole night is ahead of us."

"Let's go see the old man--if we don't he'll make an issue of it."

George was walking up the dock, a bit stooped, with a small cooler and a large togue on a stringer. It had been neatly cleaned, and looked to be about twenty inches. Will was surprised that his father had kept the fish he had so much disdain for. Without looking up, or mentioning Gretchen, George said, "Get the rope I wanted?"

"No one had 1/2 inch. Manley says it only comes 3/8s and 5/8s in cotton. I got both since it was so cheap. I can always use it with my canoe if it doesn't work for you."

The old man straightened and looked up at the pair, the sun behind him casting a long shadow on the dock. "I can use the 3/8s.", then with a disinterested tone said, "When you get in Gretchen?"

"A few hours ago."

"Will never said you were coming."

"He didn't know. It was too hot at home, and I had some messages for him."

"Must be important messages to drive thirteen hours."

"They were important, but I wanted to see you guys as well."

"I am a lawyer. It is my job to quibble," he said straightening up and smiling.

"I believe that you wanted to see Will, and found a reason to do so. I sometimes drove up here in the old days with the lamest of excuses as justification. Can't BS a BS'er. Anyway glad you're here. Talk some sense into my son. A married man needs a steady job."

"I'll do my best."

Gretchen squeezed Will's hand tightly in hers.

"Dad, can I carry something?"

"You might get my rod and the minnow bucket from the boat."

"Sure."

"Gretchen, if you wouldn't mind, could you dump the ice out of this cooler-- over behind the generator shed?"

"Sure, George."

Will went down to the boat and called back to his father. "Want the cover up?"

"No, it will be fine."

Will fetched the gear from the boat. He set the minnows free in the pond and made a mental note to bait trap for the morning. He went to the Trooper and got the supplies and his fishing gear. Gretchen dumped the ice from the cooler and they met on the porch. "Stay cool, Will", she said to him through a kiss, " Remember how much civility means to your mother."

"I'd like to kick his ass."

"But you won't."

"No. Not today anyway."

CHAPTER XII

Foxx stirred stiffly in the lambent light of the dawn. The shadows, cross-hatched on his thin blanket, twisted into strange shapes as he rolled slowly to his back--staring at the water stains on the dully stained tongue and groove ceiling boards. He knew the hour by habit, but he did not rise from his bed. The two days of walking had fatigued him beyond his memory. A brief shudder of fear wracked his wiry frame, a cramp came and went in his left calf. His head itched, and he scratched his scalp violently.

Through a gap in the curtain, and through the fly-specked and grainy glass of the window above his bed, the incipient glow of the day was vaguely red and distant. Though he had bathed in the tub in the late of the previous evening, the cabin darkening, the gas lights sibilant, and the water gray and filmy, he did not feel clean. His nose was dusty and clogged, his armpits redolent with nightmare sweat, and his eyes crusted and sore. He was hungry. He had eaten little. The small trout yielded only a small amount of sweet flesh, and he had been too tired to fix anything else.

Foxx desperately needed to relieve himself, but still could not find the strength to rise. He knew he would have to hitch a ride to Nargate to get his truck, that he could not make the two day trip again so soon. He cursed his misfortune. Foxx did not like to be beholden to any man or woman. He felt weakened by his hike. The sound of his voice, groaning with each turn and roll, startled him. The sounds of the day seeped into the camp.

In the distance he heard a boat heading down the lake for the islands, a modern quiet boat and he wondered if it was George Strang's.

Crows and ravens, quarrelsome and high-pitched, argued and bawled in the tall spruces behind the camp.

The crepuscular cacophony, silenced by the brightening morning, was yielding to the industry of the day. A truck splashed in a puddle on the road. Slowly Foxx rose from his sweaty bed. He pulled on a long coat and an old pair of, cut down, firefighter's boots, and went toward the outhouse. The grass, clumpy and thatched, was wet with dew gleamed like rime. He did not go into the outhouse, but splattered the wet grass behind a small, dying, leafless bush.

Looking up into the shadow toward Oven Rock, still dark in the early morning light, he wondered if the wolf had arisen from his den.

Foxx sat a long time at his table. He sat thinking of ways to find a ride to town without beholding himself to anyone. Perhaps he could ride in with Grayson. It would be no great favor, Foxx mused, and thought that Grayson might be grateful for the company. He could just try and hitch a ride, but Thursday was not a good day for that. Wednesday was the day most folks went to town, it broke up the week a bit. The A&P and the other stores ran Wednesday specials. June was still too early for most of the summer folks, a time when most of the people in camp were fishermen, who came supplied for a week, and then left. He thought he might have better luck hitching around the long way over the Golden Road, but he knew none of the loggers or log drivers would pick him up. He drank bitter coffee, he always made it too strong, and

ate the last small trout he had taken from the St. Jean stream. He toasted three pieces of bread over the camp stove gas flame, and slathered them with sugary jelly.

He wondered if he should start in the afternoon and resolve to camp another night. He didn't have to be back on Thursday morning, but he had told Whitey he would be in early, and he did not want to appear incapable.

The sky looked clear and he smelled no rain. His helplessness annoyed him and he cursed aloud, with enough volume to obscure the birds. "Fucking truck. Fucking paper company can't even keep the fucking roads decent."

A breeze stirred and the screen door banged open. "God damned latch," Foxx muttered aloud. "Every fucking thing is breaking on me." He rose from the table and put his dishes in the sink. He put a small pan of water on his camp stove to heat. He had built no fire in the cookstove, and the gas stove cock was off for the summer. To avoid heating the camp up in the summer, Foxx generally cooked outside on the two burner camp stove.

When the water boiled he poured it into the sink and added cold water from the bucket. He washed and rinsed the pan and dishes and put them away in the cupboard, a film of grease rimming the frying pan.

Foxx wanted to sleep and dared not even sit on his bed for fear he would doze off. He went to the well and pumped hard bringing a gushing, pulsing ,torrent spewing from the rusty orifice. He filled two buckets and brought them one at a time into the house. He poured water into a bloodshot basin and laved a cracked bar of soap hard in his hands to bring lather.

He soaped his body with the cold, hard wrung, suds, the lather popping and the dirty water dripping onto the cabin floor, and washed the soap away with a small towel soaked in the well water. He shivered in a odd dance as he wiped away the soap, and dirt.

His ears burned as he scoured them with soapy water , his bite scabs opening and the dirt and dried blood darkening the faded blue towel.

Dry, Foxx put on deodorant and fresh clothes, and dry shaved under his neck. He washed his hair again over the kitchen sink the shampoo burning the scabrous scalp in the thinning spots. He remembered the last time he had gone to a dance in town. He shivered and stamped his feet as he poured the last frigid water over his head, ladling it out of the perspiring bucket with a small sauce pan. The rinse water ran over his shoulders into the sink and down his belly.

The cold water invigorated him briefly, and he rubbed his hair dry with a determined vigor, but as he sat down, he was again enveloped in weariness.

Seated leadenly in his chair, Foxx debated going to the Grayson's and asking for a ride. He thought about taking the boat to town, leaving it at the marina, and coming back for the trailer, but he had not overhauled and tended to the motor, and he did not want to do that now.

The wind carried the drone of boats to his ears. He dozed. He dreamt the uneasy dreams of bitter and debilitating fatigue. His father hollered at him to go back into the house but he ran to the boat. His mother was limp in the bow and there was blood on her face and flies clustered in the wound, dry and black. He could see whitish bone and dark rings around her eyes, and her red shirt was splashed with

dried vermillion. Her mouth was slightly open as if she was trying to speak and her tongue was swollen and twisted.

Foxx screamed and awakened himself. His calf cramped again, he clutched it with his hand, and he cried out, "Oh Jesus". His mouth was dry and he had no water left.

Rising stiffly, he went to the well, pumping it furiously until the water came hard and cold. He cupped his hand to the flow and drank greedily, splashing his chest and pants. He was breathless from terror and the deep cold of the water. He had a sharp crick in his neck and rubbed it wearily with his hand.

Inside the dark cabin Foxx finished dressing. His fingers fumbled with the buttons on his faded red flannel shirt. He looked at the small wind up clock on his bureau and saw that it was eight o'clock. He could not remember if he had wound it when he came home, and strained to hear if it was ticking.

Foxx knew he would need a ride to get the truck. He resolved to go to the store and see if it might come up in conversation.

As he began to walk toward the Grayson's house the sun was warm and it felt good to stretch his legs. The clean clothes against his flesh, and the breeze against his face, lightened his mood. Foxx began to whistle. A monotoned rush over a chipped tooth, gave his tune an eerie air. He had not worn his boots, but instead an old pair of sneakers, blue canvas shoes with small laces taken from a pair of brown oxfords that had been his father's. A few hundred feet from the camp Foxx realized that he had left his wallet in the pants he had worn the day before. He trotted back to his home-- almost joyful, and with a lighter step. He fished the wallet from the back pocket of his

pants. It was still warm and moist from sweat and rain. Holding it up to his nose it smelled like an old wet dog.

The cabin was still cool and dark, and before leaving he opened two of the three windows along the front of the camp. The third was nailed shut so as not to rattle in the winter wind. He open the door to his room and tried to open the window above his bed. It was swollen shut. He went to the shed for a pry bar, but halfway there decided to go to Grayson's first. Foxx rounded the curve by the road into Mary's Point and the brilliance of the sun on the lake forced his eyes into narrow slits. He walked with his head down, as if he was tracking someone. He saw a small fresh footprint in the mud at the edge of the road where a stand of balsams spread over the road obscuring the sun. In the winter the snow drifted up against the trees and Foxx had often resolved to cut them back. He could not tell if it was the print of a child or a woman.

Foxx walked more quickly and deliberately, enthused by the footprint. The sole of the shoe was deep and grooved- most likely a hiking boot. He saw the print again in the dust and in the wetness by the brook out of Little Bog. When the road straightened out he saw that the boot belonged to a slender young woman who was walking only fifty yards ahead of him. Foxx slowed his pace, his heart racing, and narrowed his eyes again to more clearly make out her form. He passed by Summer's camp without even looking up, and did not see her turn suddenly from her window and draw the curtain. The woman turned into Grayson's and Foxx sped up nearly to a jog.

CHAPTER XIII

When Gretchen returned to camp Andrea was in the kitchen filling the kettle at the sink. She was wearing a bathrobe, and her hair was carelessly piled up on her head. Her eyes seemed gray in the half lit room. She greeted Gretchen cheerily, but her voice had a fatigued resignation to it. "Been walking?"

"I got up a little after Will and wrote some postcards. I took them down to the store to mail."

"It is a beautiful morning."

"It surely is."

Gretchen yawned and stretched reaching her arms behind her and clasping her hands and rolling her neck. "I think," she paused to yawn again, "that I will drive down to the river if Will isn't back in an hour or so. "

"Have you guys decided when you're going to leave yet?"

"Not yet. I met a guy--he does some work for you. He's a really odd little man--calls himself Sly Foxx. His truck is in the shop and he needs to get to Nargate tomorrow morning. He walked back from there over two days. Camped along the way. Got home last night. He seems pretty rugged. I told him we might go tomorrow early--and said he could catch a ride with us."

"Leo, or Sly as he prefers to be called, keeps our roofs shoveled in the winter and does small repairs. Back when my parents had this place running all summer his father was the caretaker. Leo was always a strange boy, and I always felt sorry for him. He never had any friends here so I tried to be nice to him. His father let him

come over here, but generally only when he was with him. His mother was killed by a falling branch over on the shore by the berry patch. A beautiful woman--part Indian. Now we never see Little Leo unless we pass him on the road, or there is a big repair to be made off-season. As a child he didn't say much. He was very shy. Spent the winter in Nargate with some friend or relative, but spent the summer riding around with his father who had a job with the paper company."

"I thought he worked for your father?"

"He did that too. He really doted on the boy. He was a hard working man. His first wife, not Little Leo's mother, drowned when her car went into a flooded river--or a pond I don't recall exactly. He had a very sad life at times, the boy, too, I suppose. He, Leo senior, later married, or moved in with a school teacher, and died somewhere down in the southern part of the state. He was a very capable man, and I'm afraid his son is not. Their camp used to be spotless and now it is pretty run down. Leo inherited whatever his father left. He apparently lives off the land and a few odd jobs. The Grayson's say he can't find work anywhere because people can't stand the way he talks nonstop. He is quite cocky as well they say--I wouldn't know. I have barely seen him in the last fifteen years."

"Well, I told him we would let him know when we were going. He said if we go today he'll ride as far as some spot he can camp and walk the rest tomorrow."

"You were good to offer. Want some breakfast?"

"No thanks, I had some earlier. I'll have some coffee though."

"I've just made some. Is it warm enough to sit out front?"

"It is. And the breeze seems to be keeping the bugs down."

Gretchen dragged two Adirondack chaises out in front of the house. She struggled to level them, working the legs into the sandy earth until they were stable. Andrea came out with a pot of coffee and two mugs. The sun was bright and reflected off the dark house warming their backs, as well as their faces. Andrea open her robe and pulled it away from her legs, and slightly off her shoulders. She closed her eyes and lifted her face toward the sky. She sighed pleasurably, and took two deep breaths. Gretchen removed her heavy boots, and the fleece vest she wore over her T-shirt. She stretched her long brown legs and lay back in the chair, her face, too, lifted to the sun. Andrea mused at how brown Gretchen was. The rest of the world was still pale with winter, yet Gretchen seemed always tan. When she had first laid eyes on her daughter-in-law, she had been struck by her dark beauty. George had wondered to her if, "Will's girl might have some Italian or colored blood in her." She had not even replied. She knew she liked the girl and that Will adored her.

Andrea longed for a sisterly confidence with the dark beauty her son loved, but she was terrified of really knowing her. She did not want to know enough about her to dislike any part of her. She wanted to tell the younger woman that she appreciated the relative peace, the restive truce, that her presence had brought to Mary's Point. She trusted her only child.

Andrea's stomach had churned with acidic nervousness all the previous evening as George had tried to goad Will into an argument. Andrea had noticed the younger woman trying to steer the conversation toward benign subjects, and try to flatter George by feigning an interest in his work. George had not been duped. Andrea had also noticed Gretchen stroking her son's thigh under the table, and the way she

looked at him when the tension seemed about to explode. Andrea could remember few conversations with her father in any detail. When George had asked her own opinion on a point, Andrea had simply refilled her glass, and said, "I'm not sure dear I leave those things to you," with a weary cheerfulness in her voice.

The sun burned on Andrea's face and a dull headache spread from her temples to her neck. George had retired early when it became apparent to him that Will was not going to engage him. Will thought his father was like the bully, who when not asked to play, stole the ball and ran off.

Andrea had stayed up until she was sure her husband was sleeping. She sipped her last glass and listened until his regular snore was heard through the sad tremulous silence, and over the gentle pock-pock of the lake. When he was asleep they could not fight.

When Andrea went in to bed, Gretchen took Will by the hand and they went out to the bunkhouse. The night was cool and she shivered as they undressed and slipped into one of the narrow bottom bunks. In the bunkhouse their lovemaking could not be heard.

Andrea sighed. "If I could stay here from May until October I would."

"Why don't you stay longer--a month or two anyway? It seems such a waste that the place is empty so much of the time."

"I can't. George could stay two months if he chose too, and break it up into two and three week stays, fly in and out of Bangor, but he won't. I could never stay by myself."

"Why not, Andrea? You can probably do anything that would need to be done."

"Suffice it to say, it wouldn't work. There are many divorced women in Philadelphia that could explain it better than me."

Gretchen did not reply. She was startled by the older woman's words. She did not need to infer a meaning as the meaning was clear. She steeped this new knowledge slowly and thought about things Will had said about his father. Things he said without explanation, things said in a way that indicated no explanation would be given. She closed her eyes and drank in the sun. She wondered if Andrea was weary, or not very bright, or both. She tried, but could not imagine, her life.

The two women sat without speaking, the coffee in their cups growing cool in the morning breeze, and the sun flushing the skin on their cheeks. A kingfisher flew back and forth along the shore, and a raft of Canada geese swam slowly by, several adults followed by fledglings, some upon the mother's back.

Each woman replayed the dinner conversation from the previous night in her mind. Gretchen recalled George asking Will if he would teach any catechism classes if he got a job at Boston College, and the way he tried to portray Middlebury as a hippy college, located in "East Jesus."

Will did not take the bait. Andrea and Gretchen changed the subject. Will acted amused and non-plussed though his anger sat like an ember in his heart. Andrea recalled the way George had called the son of an old friend, a graduate of Boston College and the law school, a "little fairy", and a "real estate and wills boy". She could never understand the meanness in her husband, or the reason she endured it.

Gretchen seriously mused on the subject of elopement.

The women started at the sound of Will's vehicle splashing through the puddle at the head of the road. Gretchen went to meet him in the field and Andrea went into the house for a glass of water and some aspirin.

Gretchen met Will on the causeway. "What did you catch?"

"Pretty good morning, though I wasn't alone today. There were three incredibly hungover assholes, making lots of noise so I packed it in early. I also used your phone to check the messages. B.C. wants to change again to an even earlier start. They spoke to Rankin and I guess he really talked me up. Sounds promising. I think we have to go this afternoon. Is that Okay?"

"Hey we can leave anytime. Only thing is I offered that Foxx guy a ride in to town today or tomorrow. His truck is in the shop and he was going to walk in to Nargate. He walked here over two days, camping one night. He said he would go today or tomorrow."

"I made a reservation in Portland. Motel Six-- nothing but the best. Figured we could cancel if you wanted to wait."

"No, I'll go anytime-though we should wait until your father gets back from fishing."

"Fuck him. I put up with all his shit last night. "

"He'll only take it out on your mom, and I really do like her."

" I love my mother, but I can't fight this battle all the time. She'll make an excuse for us."

"Well we should at least tell Foxx a time we'll be leaving so he can decide if he wants to go with us."

"I'll walk over. Then I'll come back and pack. My good clothes are in a suitcase in the Trooper. Let's take your car. It's better in the city."

"Fine-it's newer too."

"I like my old Trooper, it'll never die."

Will walked quickly up the camp road, onto the main road and down the weedy tote road to Foxx's camp. Foxx was repairing the latch on his door, and turned quickly at the sound of Will's approach. "You Andrea's boy, Will, aren't you?"

"Yes, Mr. Foxx. My fiance says you are looking to head into town."

"My truck is in the shop. I can get it tomorrow morning. I'd go today if you're going. I can camp behind the station."

"We're going later this morning--we'll come bye sometime between eleven-thirty and noon."

"I am obliged to you. I'll be ready."

Will said, "See you then", turning on his heels and heading back to camp.

Leaving camp was usually sorrowful and melancholy. Will and Gretchen packed the car and Andrea packed a cooler full of sandwiches and snacks. Gretchen asked her if they should wait for George to come back. "He'll be fine," she said unconvincingly, "You need to get going so you don't have to rush." She knew those words were inane. The rush was to leave before her husband had one last chance to incite trouble.

As Will kissed his mother goodbye she looked old and drawn to him for the first time. "Be careful. Call the Grayson's please, or call me on your father's cell phone--Do you have the number Will?"

"It's in my book. I'll call in the morning about now... when I can."

"Good luck honey,knock 'em dead. I am very proud of the both of you. I really apprerciate the way you haven't fought with your father. I don't know why he's been this way, but it will pass. He is prouder of you than he will let on."

"Bye Mom. I'll call."

Gretchen hugged Andrea and said for the first time, "Bye Mom."

The car splashed in the puddle and Will said to Gretchen,"We should hit a car wash in Portland."

"Definitely."

Gretchen looked back to see Andrea waving and crying.

Book Two

*"A son who gathers in summer is
prudent,
but a son who sleeps in harvest
brings shame,"*

Proverbs 10: 5

CHAPTER XIV

Summer stood at the end of a garden row watching and half-listening as Dorian pointed to each section of new plants and seeds, and told her the Latin and English names of each one. He had planted most everything on his garden plot graph, and had begun to dig the large trench around the outside perimeter of the garden for the fence. He planned to dig a trench ten inches deep into the sandy soil and then lay in timbers--he had found some old rail ties for sale in Orono and trucked them back to Seemonus, then drill out holes for some metal pipe. He would fit the pipe into the holes, attach chicken wire to the pipe, then bury the timbers. To tie the wire fencing to the pipe he planned to use seven inch pieces of wire he had cut to length, and laid neatly on the creosoted ties. The pipe was five feet high, a foot less than the Grayson's had advised, but Dorian figured he could go at least a foot above the pipe with the chicken wire. In one end he would build a gate. He had drawn an elaborate plan for the project on a large sketch sheet.

As Dorian explained the plot outline, Summer's mind drifted. She was absorbed in the details of her story *Lobo*. The story had become less a work of fiction than the telling of a dream. She had come to know the blue-eyed, gray-maned, wolf, intimately. Every night when she slept, every day when she dozed in the sun while reading, and in the waking day dreams of the season, she saw and spoke to the wolf. In the sleeping dreams it was always winter, the snow soft and deep and new, the branches of the pines dark and snow-tipped. The moon was always full and in the shadows other shapes moved silently in the drifts. Deer would pass unmolested as she spoke with the wolf. She did not understand the wolf's language and she did not know if he understood her, or if he did, he smiled and said nothing. Sometimes she stood naked before the wolf and was neither frightened or cold, the soft snow blowing lightly about her feet, and flying in snow devils before her eyes.

The dreams always ended the same way. A cold chilling wolf cry would split the night and the wolf would trot off looking back over his shoulder several times before disappearing into the dark woods. When she would awaken from the dream in a start, Summer would try to reconstruct the wolf's words, scribbling down the phonics as she could recall them, but they made no sense to her. She kept each piece of paper with his words, and pored over them as she ate, or sat in the sun. She did not show them to Dorian, and added to them whenever a dream of the wolf passed. She dreamed of little else.

The day was warm, unusually so, and almost no breeze came off the lake. It was more a day for late July than late June. In the bright sun the mosquitos and black flies were tolerable, but in the weedy places, and in the shady cast of the spruces, they

were ravenous. Dorian always told her that the fishing was best when the bugs were biting, and he had fished each morning, and late afternoon into evening, since he had returned.

In the middle of the day, when the high June sun seemed to hang over the lake unmoving and mute, he worked in the garden with meticulous science. Each plant had a companion so as to limit its appeal to insects, and each section of the perimeter was planted with flowers Dorian said would eliminate the need for insecticides and vigilant pest removal. He named the vegetables and flowers with an ardent insistence. " New England asters, *aster novae angliae*, these will bloom late, they're a Fall flower at home. These carrots are...." She tried to listen to the names of everything she had helped plant, but she could not.

Summer took off her work gloves and leaned absent mindedly on the handle of her rake. She wiped her brow and neck with a bandana from the pocket of her shorts and tried again to focus on what Dorian was saying. " This variety of tomato will mature in only sixty-five days-so if we lose a few plants to a freak frost we'll be ok. If it's cool ,but not too cold, they will sort of harden off like the broccoli, kale, spinach, lettuce and beans will. This other variety can't go in for another week and may not mature. It needs a eighty-five or so days and we may not get it, but if we get lucky who knows? "

Summer drifted away again, and, when Dorian paused as if expecting her to speak, she said girlishly, "How soon until we get fresh lettuce and stuff?"

"We'll get radishes and spinach first, about two weeks, then lettuce after that. The rest is hard to tell. Water, sun, temperature all affect it...in time we'll have fresh food."

"What can I do now?"

"Nothing really. I'll work on the fence tomorrow--it's not supposed to rain for a few days--just a chance of some thunderstorms. I'm gonna put the timbers down and level them--take me maybe forty minutes or so--then I thought I'd eat and head over to the river."

"How will the bugs be? I thought I might bring my book over and read while you fish."

"Lots of fly dope, long pants and long sleeves is my advice."

"I'll stay here. When you are about ready for lunch holler and I'll get it for you. There's a little soup left and some of that Greek salad you brought back. "

"Sounds good. I'll let you know when I am almost done."

Summer put her rake, gloves, and trowel in the shed. She went into the house and drank a tall glass of cold water in one greedy draught, spilling a little on her chest and neck. She washed her hands in the sink and splashed water on her face. From the refrigerator she took two plastic bowls with snap-top lids and poured soup from one into a sauce pan, and put the pan onto the stove. She turned the knob and the gas burst on with a flash of blue flame. She tried to turn it down as low as possible, but twice went too far and the flame sputtered out. On the third try she got it right. She set the table and took the other bowl with the salad to the table.

She watched her husband work through the big window. His enormity at times overwhelmed her. His muscles bulged as he picked up the rail ties and carried them to his trench. He put his big roofer's level to them and pulled them out, adding soil in the low spots and skillfully skimming the sandy earth from the high spots. It took him nearly an hour to get the timbers all in place, and all level. He swore once or twice when a deerfly bit him through his shirt, but was mostly silent. Dorian did not whistle, or hum, or sing while he worked. He was a scientist she reminded herself, and meticulous and focused. She remembered a time at a party, they were just married, when a tipsy curvaceous young woman had been flirting with Dorian. She had told Summer, unaware she was Dorian's wife, that "He's the biggest fucking botanist I've ever seen!" Summer had simply replied. "That is why I married him."

When Dorian came inside he was covered with dust that had darkened where it met the sweat on his face, and arms, and tops of his feet. Summer had smiled and half-suppressed a laugh, saying, "Jesus, Dorian, you look like some little kid who has been playing in the dirt"

"I am", he said with mock indignation, "I am"

Dorian ate in silence, not noticing that she did not eat. He scrutinized a seed catalogue with uncommon intensity. He always read seed catalogues, though he only bought seeds from Johnny's Select Seeds, a Maine farm. Once a year in the summer they went to an open house at the farm and Dorian spent the day wandering around with the owners and scientists, while Summer amused herself listening to the band under the great tent. She smiled remembering the band's name from the previous summer- *The Strange Rangers*. She recalled how they had a motto--"If we rehearsed

you couldn't afford us." Dorian sniffed and chuckled to himself as he read. Then, after a long silence he said, " This catalogue is one I picked up at Agway. It has an article on the eastern timber wolf. Says there may be more here than people think and that they are migratory between here and Quebec."

"Why is this in a seed catalogue?"

"It is actually an article about ways to keep deer out of your garden. With what the Grayson's said about deer destruction, I was just interested. The writer makes the case that enough wolves will solve the deer population problem. Christ just let the hunters, and that asshole Charlton Heston hear that one!"

Summer made no reply. She stared at her hands, the skin roughened by the garden work, and she went upto the bedroom for some lotion. She squirted a small dollop into her left palm and laved her dry hands with the white cream. When she came back to the main room Dorian was changing into jeans and a long-sleeved shirt to go fishing.

"You going back so soon?"

"It's almost three o'clock-I'll be back about five, I'll make dinner."

"No I'll make dinner, I'm sort of looking forward to it. I thought I would cook the venison steaks you brought back. We have some new potatoes left and the asparagus you brought should be cooked today. Shall I shoot for five-thirty?"

"Well six-just in case I lose track of time."

"Six-thirty to be safe?"

"No six-I'll be here by six."

Summer watched Dorian's truck pull out of the driveway and head toward the river. Its color was indistinguishable, the body covered in the calcified dust and mud of the roads. At home he would never let his truck get that dirty. He would go the car wash and clean and vacuum his truck after every snowstorm, and whenever they came home from camp. She watched until the road was empty.

A shudder of loneliness, and a strange fear, ran through her chest. She went to the sink and washed the lunch dishes. She contemplated walking to the Grayson's for an ice cream and some conversation, but did not want to face the bugs. Instead she went to the table and sat before her typewriter, a fresh page in the machine, and stared out at the lake. It was calm, the merest of puffs dappling the water, and she saw no boat's wake and heard no boat's drone. The road was drying and the brief breezes kicked up the dust. A kingfisher flew back and forth across her line of sight from a branch in a dead birch, to a place beyond her vision.

A sweet languor invaded her body and she fought the instinct to close her eyes. She did not want to sleep fearing that if she did, she would not sleep well in the night. When she did not sleep steadily in the night she did not dream, and without dreams she knew the story would never reveal itself to her. Without dreams she would never solve the wolf's language. There was so much tyranny in language. She had only the wolf's words to understand, no tactile, no sensory, or extra-sensory tools, just his gaze and his words. She came into a kind of being in his gaze, but a state of being she could not understand. She could not recall how she answered the wolf remembering only that she spoke to him, and that he seemed to understand her, though she could not recall the words or her language. It was as if she spoke to him in

the tongues of angels. She tried to remember a word, a word she had known in college, a word for the ecstatic religious outbursts in jibberish, or languages the speaker did not know they knew. She fought sleep and she searched for the word. It slipped audibly off her tongue in a moment of recognition. "Glossolalia, glossalalia, Jesus, it is something like that," She blurted aloud. Summer opened the dictionary and looked for the word. When she found it she typed it in capital letters on the fresh page in her typewriter. *"Glossolalia-noun. Incomprehensible speech in an imaginary language, sometimes occurring in a trance, an episode of religious ecstasy, or schizophrenia--speaking in tongues. See also glossology the archaic term for linguistics or study of tongues."*

Summer wondered if all language lived in every brain. Could the genetic material in her know the language of the wolf but not be able to call it up? Was there a repressed atavism that muddled the meaning of the wolf's speech? She recalled that some tongue speakers claimed, in moments of inspiration and zeal, to have spoken in languages long dead in the world. She stared at the definition in the large letters on the page. The words trance, ecstasy, schizophrenia, all beckoned to her. She tried to wrap herself in the words and to feel them and taste them. She took out her notes on the wolf's words and could not find the language. The words, as she had written them, were nearly as vowelless as she imagined Welsh to be. Consonants were crammed together and the words looked harsh and hard as she read them, but she remembered the wolf's voice as warm and soft.

Summer typed the words onto the sheet and added vowels between groups of consonants, trying to make words she could say, but she could not find the language,

and the strain of searching wearied her. Again and again she fought sleep, and then a cynical ennui draped itself around her. She believed that she would never know the language because there was no language. She thought of the awakening from a nightmare, the inarticulate suppressed howl that cannot fully escape the throat, the words that are muddled and unclearly hurled into the night--the cry of the falling sleeper that escapes as a muffled scream. She knew that only in the dream did she have the chance to understand the wolf. Her eyes closed and she fought sleep, pushing herself away from the table and rising.

At the sink she splashed her face with water. An hour had passed since Dorian had left. She stood on tip-toe and stretched, her calves trembled, and she could not stifle yawn after yawn. She was surprised by her fatigue. She grew angry with her weariness and busied herself with small chores. She washed and baited the mouse traps. She took the plates and pans from the drainer and put them in the cupboard. She swept the main room and swept the dust and sand into the dustpan, and emptied it into the small compound bucket under the sink. Upstairs she made the bed, something she rarely did at camp, with tight hospital corners, and then fluffed the pillows, carefully creasing the spread and pulling the comforter even on both sides. She gathered the dirty laundry and put it in the laundry bag.

Summer noticed the faded initials on the heavy cloth bag, D.A.H., Dorian Adam Hinds. It was the bag he had taken off to college with him as an undergraduate. Dorian, who threw nothing away, and who cared for his belongings with an odd, almost zealous devotion, had kept the ragged bag. He was sentimental about all that was old, seeming to remember the past in his possessions. He grew

things and he saved things. When she had finished straightening the bedroom, Summer went back to the table and began to organize her work. She put the dictionary back on the shelf, took the page from the typewriter and slipped it into the folder marked, *LOBO*, and stored her things in the large canvas tote bag she carried with her wherever she went. She wiped the crumbs and spots from the table, and shook the placemats over the porch railing.

A late day breeze was stirring from the south and clouds were beginning to build over the lake. Far to the south they were darker and more threatening. Back inside she noticed that the big window was fly-specked in places, and that the remains of various flies were stuck to the glass. She wiped the window with paper towels and glass-cleaner, until it squeaked and gleamed in the afternoon sun. The sun was high and bright and Summer looked at the calendar over the sink. It was the solstice. She was invigorated by her work. She resolved to to accomplish many things on the longest of days.

At five she took out the venison steaks and noticed that they were sliced thinly and she assumed that broiling them would make them tough and dry. She took down several cookbooks from the shelf in the main room and began to peruse them until she found a recipe where the meat is cut from the bone and stewed in a roux with red wine. With a fresh luster and resolve she began to follow the recipe, sauteing mushrooms and onions and freshly squeezed garlic in oil and butter. In the drippings she made a roux of flour and wine and some beef stock from a can. While this simmered lightly she cut the meat from the delicate bones and browned it quickly in dredged flour in another pan. She then set the steaks to simmer in the roux. Summer

worked quickly and purposefully, when the meat and vegetables and roux were all simmering together, she stood over the mixture and breathed deeply, sucking in all the pungent aromas.

When the food was cooking she washed the utensils and pans she had used and set them in the drainer, then poured a half of glass of wine. She sipped slowly while scrubbing the new potatoes clean and drying them off with a towel.

Summer checked her watch. "Five-thirty," she said aloud, and she took a pan and filled it with water. She quartered the potatoes and set them in the pan. The burner flashed to life and Summer adjusted the flame. She laid the asparagus on a small rack in a frying pan. She added water almost up to the vegetables and placed it on the stove with a lid. "I'll start them when Dorian gets home," she said to herself.

She sat at the table and looked at the lake, wishing her hands had a task. A boat was coming almost silently down the lake--the wake brilliant and white in the sun. The clouds were still far to the south and the wind had calmed again. As Summer sat transfixed by the light on the lake she heard the potatoes over boil and the water hiss and bubble on the burner. She grabbed a potholder and pulled the pan from the burner and lowered the flame.

They sat a long time at the table. The first shadows of the evening grew across the lawn and the garden from the west. The dark would come slowly. They sat across from each other, holding hands and looking down the lake to the mountains. They had both eaten greedily, the sophistication of the meal almost defying their surroundings. The wine, dry and warm and rich, had brought a delicious weariness to them both. The dishes and pans lay soaking in cooling suds in the sink, and Summer

had lit a small candle that cast its own shadows on the table and walls. Dorian flipped pages in his catalogues.

The day dimmed and cooled and they said little, occasionally yawning, or mentioning the beauty of the lake and the mountains in the high summer evening. Far down the lake to the south the clouds darkened and brooded over the lake, the fading sunlight streaking them with color back lighting their purple and white folds. The breeze lazily dappled the lake in irregular puffs, and a canoe inched its way across the bay, the sternman and bowman paddling in synchronous harmony. The kingfisher continued its persitent flight across the cove.

Dorian stretched and said through a yawn, "I'm going to go check the garden."

"You do that--feed the bugs for me too."

"I still have some fly dope on me, I won't be out there long enough to lose too much blood. No transfusions today."

"Well I'm going to get my book and read up in bed."

"I'll be in in a bit, then I'll do the dishes and shower up before I come up."

"That will be nice--don't be too long will you?"

"Nope--I won't be long."

Summer took her book from her tote bag and went into the bathroom. She put the book on the back of the toilet and sat down. She got up, washed her hands, flossed her teeth and brushed them, the sweet toothpaste clashing annoyingly with the remnant warmth of the wine. She spit savagely and rinsed her mouth from a cupped handful of cool water. As she was mounting the stairs she heard Dorian curse, the

anger in his voice palpable, as it came sharply through the screen. "Goddamnit--get the hell out of here."

She went out onto the porch and called to him." What's wrong?"

"I have got to do the fence tomorrow morning. There is a damn rabbit already picking at the lettuce plants. I almost got him with a rock," he said angrily.

"It's too late tonight to do anything. Come on in. We'll get the fence up tomorrow," she said soothingly.

"No you go up. I'm going to spread the chicken wire over the plants that are up and try to deter the bastards until I can get the fence up. I did not plant *daucus carota* to fatten frogs for snakes. We'll have to get up early," he answered without great passion, but with a sharp resignation in his voice. He knew that he would have to miss dawn on the river, and that in the early light the bugs would be menacing.

"Can I help?"

"No it won't take long," he answered.

Summer turned down the bed. For a moment she thought how odd it was that Dorian would so eagerly kill a rabbit for eating a small plant. She decided it was something about men she could never know.

The night was cooling and she undressed with a shiver. She put her underpants in the laundry bag and hung her shirt and shorts on the peg in the closet. She slipped her sandals off and stowed them beneath the bed. She unhooked her bra and put it to her nose and added it to the clothes on the peg. She slipped on a long nightgown and lit the gas lamp above the bed. The light hissed to life and brightened. Summer plumped the pillows behind her and began to read. Dinner lay heavy in her

stomach and her eyes tired quickly. She heard Dorian come in the house and go to the sink. The words on the page blurred until she could no longer focus on them. The light hissed and she heard Dorian go out to the shower. Her book dropped to the floor and she squirmed deeply into the covers.

The dream came to her quickly and vividly. She stood in the clearing in fresh snow and waited for the wolf. A doe browsed on the tips of evergreen bushes straining her slender neck to reach the needles. A rabbit, white and shaggy, bounded past her leaving huge prints in the new snow. An owl sat calmly in a branch above the deer, winking and making a purring sound in its throat. Summer was aware of something behind her and she looked over her shoulder to see the wolf regarding her. His eyes were brighter than she had seen them before and he was speaking, but too softly for her to hear. He came close and circled her, still speaking, and though she could hear his words she still did not have his language. Summer looked at her feet and she was wearing small snowshoes on her bare feet. She was dressed in a long white nightdress. The wolf began to sniff her as he might another wolf, all the while speaking in a soft warm voice. He rose on his hind legs and walked around her several times. He dropped down on all four legs and stood before her. He lifted one paw and looked at her, and moved the paw as if to beckon her closer. She could not move. He circled her several times and each time crouched lower to the ground, until he lowered himself to a lying position. He rolled to his back and a soft moan rose from his throat, neither threatening nor soothing. The wolf crawled forward on his kness and took the hem of her nightdress in his mouth and pulled her to the snow. Summer knelt in the snow. She did not fear, but she strained to understand what the

wolf said to her. Then the wolf rose to his feet and a strange cry came from his throat. He circled Summer as she knelt, then stopped behind her. She felt his breath sweet and cool on her neck, his snout pressed to her. She felt him back slightly away and she was suddenly afraid, but not terrified, to look behind her. She felt her nightdress being raised and realized that the wolf was trying to mount her. A cry struggled to escape her throat and fear welled in her chest. She awoke with a scream and struggled from deep beneath the bed clothes. She did not know where she was.

"Honey, honey you're alright. Shhh, I'm here its alright-you were having a bad dream."

"Oh Jesus, Oh Jesus, Oh God."

"It's okay baby, I'm right here."

"Thank God."

"What were you afraid of?"

She could not answer, and clung to her husband. He held her and stroked her head. Finally she spoke and lied. "I was falling and I couldn't wake up. Have I been asleep long?"

"No. I just got here and was trying to get into bed when you screamed. It was weird. You were stretched out kitty-corner and I was just trying ease you over a bit."

"I'm sorry. I tried to read but I fell asleep."

Their eyes had accustomed themselves to the dark. He kissed her, his breath still perfumed by toothpaste, hers warm and soured by the dry terror of her nightmare.

"My breath must be awful. God I'm sweating."

He answered by kissing her again and bringing his hand up to her right breast. She rolled to him and hugged him tightly, her hands gripping the strong muscles in his shoulders and neck. When he kissed her she kissed him back with desire and force. She helped him slide her nightgown over her hips and she turned and ground her sex into his. He brought his hand down across the warmth of her flank.

She moaned softly, and with an ache in her voice--a moan from deep in her viscera. She climbed onto him and lowered herself onto his penis with an audible gush. He wanted to kiss her breasts but she leaned down and smothered him with a kiss, coming suddenly and violently. She shuddered and begged him for a moment of stillness, feeling a delicious faintness. Her breathing was quick and hard, she moved slowly and tenderly. Dorian rolled her to her side and withdrew. He pulled a pillow from the head of the bed and she knew that he wanted to enter her from behind. She rose up to allow for the pillow then felt him behind her. She remembered the wolf. She raised her hips and he found her and easily slipped into her. She pulled another pillow to her face and moved until they found a rhythm. He was slow in reaching his climax and just as she began to tire he came and pushed forward nearly pressing her into the headboard. She felt almost smothered and tried to pull the pillow from beneath her face and chest. Slowly Dorian rolled them both to the side and she let out a deep sigh and sucked in a deep breath. They lay without speaking until he slipped from her. He reached for the tissues and handed her the box after taking some for himself.

"Better than a bad dream ,Sum?"

"Better than a bad dream."

Summer rose from the bed and changed her gown. She took a small hand towel from a door and put it on the bed covering their commingled wetness. She went downstairs and got a glass of water and brushed her teeth again. When she came back to her bed Dorian was snoring. She settled deep into the sheets. She heard a mousetrap snap. A mosquito whined somewhere in the house but she could not be sure where. The breeze had come up and she could hear the waves breaking on the shore. She would have preferred to hear only the *pock-pock* of the water against the rocks, than her husband's snoring and the mosquito's whine.

For a long while, she could not tell how long, she lay awake thinking about the dream or nightmare. She tried to re-dream the dream, but could not. She longed to revisit the terror and the beauty. She wondered why her husband had mounted her like a wolf. For a brief moment she was terrified that Dorian might also know the dream. She tried to imagine that it was snowing outside. Far down the road a dog barked. It awoke another dog and soon many were barking faintly in the distant dark. The barking ceased and the night was still and quiet. The mosquito ceased to whine. Dorian rolled to his stomach and ceased to snore. Summer lay still and heard another trap snap down. She closed her eyes and listened for the wind and the waves. She slept and did not dream.

CHAPTER XV

Lobo scrambled across the loose scree and trotted up the path he had worn in the ruddy dirt to the cave mouth. He paused and looked behind him, then out across the lake, and then slowly and steely-eyed down the long slide. He nosed about the rupestrine plants in the dusty crevasses. The sun was well up and it was his second trip to the cave. Inside the cave on the cool stone floor, he dropped his rabbit, and nuzzled his sleepy mate as she nursed the litter. He moved the rabbit, still warm and soft, away from the spot where she lay. She rose up and made her way to the kill. She smelled it and tossed it briefly in the air, snagging it in her mouth before it fell to the ground. The pups sniffed and searched for her teats, a wriggling mass, like emerging maggots, crawling, tumbling and whimpering plaintively.

Lobo turned and went out into the light. He put his nose into the wind and circled several times before lying in the mouth of the cave. The morning sun heated the earth and the thermals rose. The 'killy-killy-killy,' of the hawks and the squawking of the crows serenaded the sinewy sire as he rested, his nose on his forepaws. His eyes blinked shut and for ten minutes he slept fitfully.

Lobo awoke and rose and circled again, listening to the sounds of the cave and the sounds of the woods. A float plane on fire patrol droned up the lake and he retreated to the darkness of the cave mouth. He would hunt again in the day. The days were long and his mate needed food. The pups, not yet fully weaned, were beginning to eat both solid, and regurgitated, food. In the early light, and again in the twilight, they went beyond the dark mouth of the cave and tumbled about on the broad cliff

behind the rock face. In the brightness of the day, beyond the darkness of the cave, they stretched and looked up into the bright light. They still did not wander far from their mother.

Lobo sat weary and wary beneath the low arch of the cave. Shadows danced in the cave as clouds formed in the morning sky. The respiring earth exhaled its moist breath and the cool air above condensed it to vapor. The light from the great shaft of the ceremonial oven shone on his haunches, firing his brindle fur to a burnished red. He circled and lay down again in the half-light and dozed.

The long days were the riskiest. Lobo had to hunt more often in full daylight than he preferred. The cave was so secluded, and the approach so steep, that he could not drag large kills to it. Even the big deer did not run on this high ridge, but there was no scent of man.

Lobo knew that the pups were almost old enough to hunt, and that they would have to venture into the lower country where the prey was more abundant. Squirrels, rabbits, mice, partridge, and an occasional duck from the tarn, were the family's main diet. He had to bring it all to them. The pups were restless and were playing in the shadows of the cave. They snapped at flies drawn to the scent of the kill. His mate had gorged herself on the rabbit, and he heard her grinding the bones for the marrow. The pups played with pieces of the kill and squabbled and batted and rolled over the scattered remains of food in the cave. Lobo's mate had moved to the sunlit mouth of the cave and kept the young ones from leaving the cave itself.

The big wolf sensed that the time to move was at hand. Lobo lowered his head onto his paws and slept. His own stomach growled and churned, and a pang of hunger

caused him to start. Instinctively he arose and put his nose into the wind. He circled and lay back down. He had not even eaten any mice since his last big kill. The deer he had taken had been small, and he had dragged it a long way, through the human places and up the long path. It had taken him nearly a whole long June day to reach the cave, with just a quarter of the deer. When he went back to the kill he found coyotes at the carcass and killed one. The deer was but hide and bone and entrails when he returned. He did not eat the coyote but tore it wildly apart and scattered it about a small clearing. He had trotted off and looked back to see the carrion eating birds descend into the small clearing.

When Lobo had been with the pack, the hunting was easier. Though the deer and moose were faster than any wolf, they were often no match for the pack. Still, even his gnawing hunger did not make him long for the pack. He did not want to crouch with his tail between his legs and whine when the alpha male postured before him.

He had left the pack, and wandered south until he picked up the scent of his mate. She could not keep up with her pack. She had stumbled on a slide and lain for a week by a stream under a fallen pine, nearly starving while her hip healed. She tired faster than he did and cried out when he mounted her, or she slipped on wet stones. She had carried a litter of six, but two were too small and died. He had carried them away, and dug a hole for them in the soft edge of a field where the coyotes would not dig them up. He felt the hunger and knew that soon they would leave for lower ground. In a few months he would take his new pack and move north again toward Quebec. He had marked this summer territory with his urine and feces, and by

digging in the ground. Below him the food was plentiful, but man was everywhere in the woods.

The pups played with pieces of skin and fur, tugging them in their clinched jaws, playing tug of war with the wet remains of the rabbit. Lobo slept fitfully, and his mate strained to stay awake. After they had eaten and romped Lobo knew the pups would sleep. He would hunt again. He knew the time to descend to the rendezvous spot was near. He stretched and circled and lay down on the warm rocks.

Lobo awoke and raised his ears and put his nose to the wind. The earth began to exude its muddy scent. The thermals carried the hawks up out of sight, their call faint and clipped. The big wolf rose slowly and looked into the cave. His mate whimpered to him, her gaunt frame but rib and sinew, her muzzle lathered from sleep.

The pups dreamed. Lobo sighed back to his mate and left the shadow of the cave. The shadows of high clouds were cast on the cave wall, and looked like a herd of buffalo moving slowly through high grass. Lobo began to scramble back and down across the scree in the middle of the slide. He jogged with his nose lifted and his ears keen to the sounds of the woods. Birds spied him and called from the treetops along the ridge.

Several hundred feet below the ridgeline his eye caught sight of three does, nibbling new shoots at the edge of a hardwood clearing. The wolf slowed and lowered his rippling frame. The hunger in his stomach hardened his eyes. Noiselessly he turned into the wind and smelled the deer. The doe and her two yearlings browsed in the new grass and flitted their tails, catching the sunlight in the forest opening. The canopy was still not fully opened and Lobo had little cover. He suddenly longed for

the pack. With only four other wolves they could surely bring the deer down. Two could charge the deer from the downwind side and drive them toward the others. They would run the deer to exhaustion--just like dogs, charging and resting in turn, until the spent animal could be taken down and killed.

Lobo crept to within fifty yards of the prey. The doe lifted her head at the cursing of a crow and put her nose into the wind. She stood still, barely flicking her ears, and waited for a scent. Lobo crouched silently and still. One of the twin yearlings bounded ten yards closer to the wolf and nosed down into a thatchy clump of new grass. The wolf did not flinch, his hunger searing and raw, and waited as the yearling chewed the dry dead grass. Almost involuntarily, he coiled his muscles and laid his ears low on his skull. The distance was too great. The deer, far too swift to be taken down alone, unless she drew closer, lifted her head and listened to the breeze.

Lobo waited. The wind came strong into his face and the smell of the deer angered him. The mother deer raised her head, and flicked her ears, and came closer to the yearling. Lobo knew these were wild deer unlike the deer near the human places. His stomach tightened. Lobo lowered himself as close to the shady floor of the woods as he could and narrowed his eyes. He saw the white patch on the nearest yearling's chest, and when the young deer took one more step toward the edge of the clearing, he sprang out.

The deer turned and sprang away, her white flag less than a foot from his jaws. He barely raked the flank of the yearling with his right claw but the deer bounded away. The three terrified animals leaped serpentine through the brush and

Lobo tried to follow the one he had touched. He could smell the blood of the deer. In only a few seconds the deer were gone. Lobo put his nose to the ground searching for the scent of the deer he had raked. For an hour he stalked the prey, crossing back and forth over a small stream, but did not get close. He was tired and hungry.

Lobo had followed the scent down a long narrow valley through scrubby hardwoods and some old growth pine. It was a dark shady place, and in places dusty snow lay in piles where it had been driven by the wind into thickets and against ledges. He nosed some snow, the icy crystals cool on his fevered snout, and paused to hunt mice in a large field at the end of the valley. It was the first food he had eaten since he had killed the deer. He found six , young, brown, almost blind, field mice, but a few mouthfuls, and his hunger barely abated.

The noon sun lit the field and warmed the wolf's brindled back. The flight of the deer made him realize that the time to move the pups had come. With his mate's help he might have been able to take the yearling down. Alone it was hopeless. He would move the family to this valley, and this field would be the rendezvous place. Here he would form the pack and become the dominant male. He would arch his back and raise his ears and the other wolves would crouch before him with their tails between their legs.

When Lobo returned to the den he carried two young partridges in his jaws. His mate whimpered to him, and he brought the birds to her and dropped them at her feet. The pups chased and nipped at the down as it fluttered in the half-dark of the cave.

When the birds were eaten the pack left the cave and stepped into the full light of a June evening, and began the descent to the valley.

CHAPTER XVI

Route 2 is the path across the roof of New England--the Pulp and Paper Highway. From the western edge of northern Vermont, across the rugged Kingdom into the stark shadows, and magnificent peaks of the Mount Washington Valley, and through the paper towns of Maine to the border in New Brunswick, it follows the old trail of commerce--past the giant piles of logs wrested from the great forests of the northeast, and the once log-choked rivers--Androscoggin, Kenebec and Penobscot, in a tortuous, sinewy, line. The huge trucks bound for Mexico, Bucksport, Berlin, Lincoln, Jay and the other pulp, paper, and sawmills, teeter precipitously on the ice-humped spine of the thin black ribbon of asphalt, swaying like giant fir trees in the winds of winter.

From the islands of Lake Champlain, over the Green, White and Blue mountains the drive is slow and wearying. There is no alternative route east to west across the rugged region, and much of the expanded economic opportunity that has fueled the growth of southern New England has never materialized in the mountainous north. Without the rivers to drive logs down, they are carted on the monstrous trucks, throaty diesels, that obscure the view of the traveler unfortunate enough to languish behind them, and slow the long uphill climbs to near stasis.

The other wheels of commerce, semis laden with goods, great gasoline tankers, flatbeds hauling skidders and loaders to the uncut woods, salesmen in sedans, skiers in shiny sport utility vehicles with huge roof racks, motorhomes from Ohio with South of the Border bumperstickers and pictures of Mount Rushmore

emblazoned on the fender, chip trucks, pickups, battered old station wagons, luxury cars with plates from Pennsylvania, New York, and most unwelcomed, Massachusetts, join in a snakey line, exchanging positions when the long grades are widened with passing lanes, or when a long open stretch allows one or two cars to momentarily slip beyond the diesely exhaust of a giant twenty-wheeler.

Burlington. Montpelier, St. Johnsbury, Lancaster, Gorham, Bethel, Farmington, Skowhegan, Bangor, Lincoln, to Houlton and into New Brunswick, the narrow, black trail carries the meager business of the north woods.

The tourists are carried from Boston and New York on smooth wide highways that run north and south up the valleys, Interstate 91 following the Connecticut river on the Vermont side, and Interstate 93 cutting into the heart of the New Hampshire mountains, and Interstate 89 connecting them both. Bangor to Hartford may be driven in far less time than one can make it from Bangor to Burlington, though by the crow's flight the distance is not so great. Thus the region has a rhythm to it, there is a tide that surges north on Friday and south on Sunday, between the slopes in the winter and the lakes and high mountain towns in the summer. In brief intervals, the mud season of April and May, and the bright days between Labor Day and the first bursts of Autumn's fire on the hillsides, the tide slows on these arteries, and beats only with the pulse of the Pulp and paper Highway.

Will eased the car into traffic on the eastern edge of Montpelier. Gretchen slept.

He, too, was tired, but he wanted to put some distance between himself and Vermont.

The interviews had gone well. He had some confidence, but that was muted by the

enormous odds against him. He wanted to tell his mother how well things had gone and dreaded telling the same to his father. He wanted to tell someone, he wanted to shout to anyone who would listen, that he had done well, that he had committed no faux--pas, no egregious mistake. He had been genuinely liked by the people he met. It was hard to fight down the impulse to celebrate. As the road rolled over the hills he tried to imagine what he would do if he were offered both jobs, and then reconciled himself to the likelihood that he would be offered neither one.

Will desperately wanted Gretchen and was aroused at the thought of spending the night in a motel with her. He knew that she had made quite an impression everywhere they went. He had not asked her how she felt, and he suddenly felt a twinge of regret and remorse. An old pickup, with a shot muffler, shot past the Jimmy and nearly collided with a car head on. Will hit the brakes and Gretchen nearly awoke. Barely audibly, Will cursed the driver. Gretchen shifted in her seat.

The sun shone full in his rearview mirror, and the Jimmy rolled along the dark road. The traffic snaked slowly, Will cursed softly again, when he passed one truck only to find himself nearly stalled behind another. He found the slowness wearying and more annoying than the rush hour snarls of the Schuylkill Expressway. In the city he could understand, explain, and almost enjoy, the tortured pace of the evening exodus, but with the June light casting the long shadows of the mountains over the road, he was vexed by the tedium.

Will had no deadline, no distance he need cover in a set time, yet the obstacles in his path nettled him. He wanted to play the radio, but did not want to

awaken Gretchen. His eyes darted from the road to her bare tanned legs, and up to the hills.

Will pondered life in Boston, and life in Vermont. He could only imagine his father's thunderings about Catholics and cowtowns, and the modest life of a professor, his gratuitous barbs about the cost of possessions and the need for money. He worried less about his ability to dismiss, with a good-natured cheer, his father's taunts, than he did about the grave distress the tensions would cause his mother. Will would not crack or quit, but he worried that his mother might have a breakdown. He worried about her fondness for alcohol; he worried that she would slide into drunkenness, or that she would simply begin to die a slow death from boredom and abandonment. His parents seemed remarkably able to be quite alone, together. He fretted that his father's capacity for meanness had grown. He knew that his father's anger would focus on his mother when he had gone to Boston or Vermont, or to wherever he might go.

Will found it hard to concentrate. Route 2 offers little relief from attention, no mesmerizing stretches of empty road, no dreary landscapes, but instead presents a relentless barrage of wild beauty, jarring pot-holes and frost heaves, slow toiling trucks, and cross winds.

Gretchen awoke briefly when Will steered off the short stretch of the interstate which skirts St. Johnsbury. Drowsily, with sleep spittle on her cheek, she asked where they were, and when Will answered she returned to sleep. Back on the old road the pace slowed again and Will like a man toiling in the heat who pauses to enjoy a brief breeze before returning to his drudgery.

They crossed the swollen Connecticut River, at Lancaster, entered New Hampshire, and began the climb from the river's low, but narrow, plain, up into the high Mount Washington Valley. The late sun was reflected off the snows of the tops of the highest peaks, and looked blue-grey in the long waning afternoon.

Later, Gretchen awoke hungry and needing a rest room ten minutes out of Gorham. "Can you make it ten minutes?" Will asked.

"I don't really want to wait that long."

"It's either wait or hit the woods at a pulloff--there's a trailhead a few miles up."

"I'll wait."

"Want to get a motel in Gorham or go on to Bethel or Skowhegan?"

"As long as I get to pee, I don't care if we go all the way to camp."

"I don't want to get in real late. If either of them are in their cups, or if Dad is pissed off about anything--fishing, the generator, you name it, he'll be spoiling for a fight. I would rather deal with them in the morning. I'd like to have it work out that he's out fishing when we get there so Mom can at least enjoy the good news."

"You're awfully sure you've got these offers."

"No. I'm just sure I'm in the running."

"Everyone seemed to like you."

"Yeah, but that's a long way from getting called back for another round. I mean..hey...being liked is good. Better than being shit on or dismissed, but these are real class gigs, and the competition will be fierce as hell."

"Hey, if you can deal with your father, this ought to be easy."

“Well, these guys aren’t the bullshit artists the old man is. You are never going to scam them. They either like my work and think I’ll be a good long time guy, or they’ll go with experience and fame.”

“Which one do you want?”

“If I got both offered to me we’d have to think it through. I’ll obviously take either one, if only one gets offered to me. In some ways that would be easier.”

“So you hear from B.C. sooner.... Right?”

“I’m supposed to call next week. They’d call me, but we may be at camp, so I said I would call them. They want the new person onboard soon. I think the funding doesn’t start until the position is filled. The Middlebury people are in a hurry too, but man they have to have a big list of candidates. Then there is the possibility of the new program at UVM, that guy told us about last night. I can hear the old man now.

“Vermont? Since when did you get into agriculture?”, or some shit like that. Why do I even speak to him. It’s all nuts. What do you think?”

“I think Boston has advantages for me that Vermont may not offer, but Vermont is an awfully beautiful place. I can’t focus until the choices are real. As for why you speak to your father, I guess we all hope we can get along with most anyone...besides, for all her faults, your mother doesn’t have a mean bone in her body.”

“I guess.”

They drove in silence, each rolling the other’s words around in their mouths. Will thought about the stretch of the New Haven River they had passed in Vermont, and how inviting it had looked. He thought about the stunning magnificence of the

Middlebury campus, and the proximity of it to mountains and rivers and Lake Champlain. He thought about the city of Boston, a city of young people, the libraries and bookstores and the charm of Fenway Park.

He tried to logically dissect the advantages of each place, but found the sleek curve of his lover's calves, the pearl drop nails of her perfect toes, and the sheen of her nut brown hair, more alluring. He decided that it was bad luck to even imagine that he might get one of the jobs, he did not want to jinx his chances, but every other subject that came to his mind, save his lover's body, depressed him. Gretchen looked out the window and tried not to think of her full bladder.

Will eased the Jimmy into a gas station and convenience store in Gorham. Gretchen went inside to use the bathroom and get some spring water. Will pumped the gas and stood upwind of the vapours, smelling instead the stacks of Berlin, faintly sweet and almost imperceptible on the breeze.

The day dimmed and cooled as they entered Bethel, the shadows darker, the light waning behind them. A weary ague seemed to settle in Will's bones. West of Rumford, west of the pungent stacks of the Mexico mill, west of the great falls of the Androscoggin, he eased the Jimmy into the Buchanan Motel.

It was not yet the height of the summer tourist season, and the last skiers had departed the valley a month before. The spacious motel's rooms were occupied mostly by travelers, salesmen, and retired Midwesterners on their way to the coast of New England, and the beaches of the Maritime Provinces. The sound of children in the pool, and running along the balconies was still some weeks away.

A sliding glass door led out of their room onto a small concrete patio, where two white plastic chairs, winter weary and chipped, faced the river and overlooked a weedy hay field. Gretchen opened the slider and stood in the frame. Will came up behind her and rubbed her neck and shoulders. They stared out across the field at the river glinting in the last shafts of light. He slid his hands up under her T-shirt and caressed her breasts, kneading them softly through her bra.

“You’re incorrigible,” she whispered, “My mouth tastes like old socks. Let me shower and brush my teeth first. I’m really grubby.”

“Brush your teeth. I’ll shower with you. Then we can make love. Then we can eat, and have a drink at the bar--come back here and make love again.” he said softly, his lips against her neck.

Gretchen stepped back, closed the slider, drew the curtain, and turned to Will. She patted his chest and stepped into the bathroom and stripped off her clothes. “Get my shampoo will you.”

“Be right there.”

The shower was close and narrow and they fumbled soaping each other. They could barely exchange places to rinse off the soap and shampoo. When they were clean they dried each other off, Will patting Gretchen lightly, his lover vigorously rubbing his wet hair.

The sun set and the room was dark and cool as they emerged from the brightness of the bathroom. Gretchen shivered as she slipped between the fresh cool sheets. Will turned the television on softly and placed the remote on the nightstand. He entered the bed in a windy leap. Gretchen shivered audibly. “God, Will, don’t take

off the covers!” He slid over to her and pulled her cool body to his. She felt him warm and hard against her. “You’re like a hot water bottle.” He kissed her deeply and she shuddered again. He rubbed her vigorously, her back, her thighs, her buttocks and she warmed.

With the familiarity of lovers she rolled to her back and he entered her. Twice he slowed to delay his climax, and twice she pulled him closer to speed hers. He rolled to his back and they nearly uncoupled. Now warmed she rose above him, the covers slipping first from her shoulders and then her flank, until she writhed naked above him and called out his name over the dull drone of the television. She trembled in climax, and ground ever slower against him. Gently, when she had all but ceased to move, he resumed moving until, he too, groaned with pleasure.

In the first dark they lay still. Gretchen yawned and stretched sleepily. “Maybe I’ll just got to sleep now.”

“Not hungry?”

“Yeah I am. If I don’t get up now I may not make it to dinner.”

Will threw the covers off the bed and rolled on top of Gretchen again. “Let’s eat and have a drink. Then let’s come on back here and I’ll be even better.’

“Jesus, you’re something else. Let’s eat first.”

They dressed quickly. The restaurant was dark, with candles on each table and a large vinyl covered menu at each place. The waitress was young and new and made many mistakes for which she apologized relentlessly. They ate quietly, splitting a bottle of wine, and holding hands beneath the table.

Will imagined the fight he would have with his father. Gretchen imagined life in rural Vermont, or Boston. As fatigue and road weariness enveloped Will he knew he would not make love to Gretchen again until morning. As the wine burned softly in her cheeks Gretchen knew the same thing.

When they had finished eating, they sat and nursed the last of the wine while the sky blackened with gravid clouds.

CHAPTER XVII

A bleak stagnant mist enveloped the valley as Will and Gretchen drove through the acrid air of Rumford. They spoke little. The radio offered nothing, and Gretchen inserted a tape in the deck, but kept the volume low. They both could sense the coming confrontation with George, but neither knew how to prevent it, or soften its unpleasantness. Gretchen looked out at the grey hillsides and wondered if she could give up Philadelphia for Northern New England.

As they drove the darkness gathered and cooled. Their noses itched with the warmed dusty air of the defroster. For long hours they rode in silence, the tape decks volume drowned out by the whirr and splash of the Jimmy's tires, and their own thoughts caught in their throats.

In Nargate they stopped to buy supplies, fresh greens and bread still warm from the baker's oven. Will considered buying lobsters at the seafood store, but thought his father might ridicule the gift. "Pretty rich tastes for a school teacher aren't they?" he could imagine hearing the old man say. The crustaceans might become a flashpoint for his father's anger. Will seethed with a flaring hatred at the thought that a simple gift might be the spark to a great and pernicious quarrel.

The road was wet, and the weeping hillsides and bogs dripped water onto the packed gravel, as the Jimmy bumped along. At the checkpoint they lingered, making small talk with the man at the gate. Will asked about the fishing at Canada Falls, and the gatekeeper said he heard that the river was slow and murky. Gretchen fidgeted.

As they drew close to Mary's Point, Will slowed the Jimmy down and pulled to the side of the road. He looked at Gretchen and drew a deep, almost raspy, breath and said, "If he acts like a prick we'll leave. I can get my gear in no time. You're right Gret, and I'm right. I can't fight my mother's battles, and I can't let him ruin our happiness. I'll try to buy time by telling him the truth. Nothing is certain. I'll tell him I'm leaving all my options open--but I won't suggest I'm thinking about law school. If we can get through tonight we'll be alright...I think we will anyway. Look Gret...I won't provoke him if possible, but if he flips out, or my mother gets drunk and ugly, we can just turn around, drive into Nargate, get a room and be out of here. I know this has been a really shitty and bumpy ride this last week. Jesus I'm grateful you came, but it isn't worth always being on edge, always waiting for an explosion, measuring every word...Fuck him. He isn't anyone so goddammed special. If we have to go we have to go. I can't put you through anymore of this, and I can't take much more myself."

Will paused, but as if he would go on. He said nothing more, his hands gripping the wheel of the car.

"I'll go with you, or stay. It's your call. I would suggest that it would be better to stay if we can--but I'll go if we need too. I'm beginning to feel like a gypsy, but that's alright. It's better than an ugly fight. I came to be with you...here at camp, or in a motel. Actually the last motel was just fine."

Gretchen patted Will's leg and leaned over and kissed him on the cheek.

"We'll be okay. I believe that."

Pulling the Jimmy back onto the road Will let out a great sigh, and said quietly, "Be cool. Will...be cool." His knuckles gleamed white.

Andrea greeted them as they came up onto the porch. The dark clouds sat low and glowering over the lake. Andrea was dressed in jeans, a flannel shirt of Will's, and a deep red fleece vest. She stood with her arms wrapped tightly to her sides. Will divined a florid fatigue in his mother's face, and a frightened weariness in her welcoming hug. As they put their rucksacks and backpacks on the porch, and placed the grocery and bakery bags on the kitchen counter, no one spoke. Only when Gretchen excused her self to use the bathroom did Andrea speak.

"So, Will.... how did it go?" Andrea asked

"Where's Dad?"

"He's fishing. We had a fight last night. I begged him to avoid fighting with you, and to be enthusiastic about your plans, and he got very mean. He's never been easy to live with, but once he was a man of great energy and spirit. My God, my father really didn't care for him after awhile, but I thought I sensed something in him, I don't know, a daring maybe, a spark of real fight....I don't know what he wants now. I don't know why he is so bitter. But no matter what I don't want him to make us bitter." Andrea paused and took a handkerchief from the pocket of her jeans.

"Will, it was awful. I may stay here when he leaves. I may leave him. I'm tired Will. I've tried to be a happy person. I've tried to enjoy living. I know I don't think about deep things and I know people think I've always been spoiled, but I try not to be mean. I don't know why people can't be happy with other people's happiness."

“He’s just mean. He just can’t abide people not agreeing with him. He’s a damn cliché. He never got to be the big dog, and he has to blame someone else for his shitty feelings about himself. Jesus, MomI’ve been nearly sick all day. If he blows up Gret and I are taking off.”

“Did you get a job offer?”

“No, but I will, if not one of these another one. I feel good about it too. Jobs at schools like Middlebury and BC are incredibly difficult to even be interviewed for. He ought to be proud--impressed even, but he wants to belittle me, and he wants to belittle you, because we’re convenient and vulnerable. I used to want to please him, but I don’t care anymore.”

“I know honey...I know.”

“He’s driving you to drink too much as well.”

The words stung Andrea, and Will regretted them the minute they passed his lips.

“Mom, I didn’t mean it they way I think you took it. I just think you are going crazy staying with him. Hell, I’d drink too if I had to listen to his sanctimonious shit all the time. He tries to make people feel stupid all the time. I’m not stupid and neither are you. He just needs to bully people so he can feel good about himself. I am so tired of his crap about working his way out of Lancaster...as if he’s the only person to ever have a tough go of things.’

Gretchen returned and Andrea looked at her with longing. “Gretchen, I wish you two well. I’m sorry that there is always this tension here. I’m sorry we all tiptoe around George and his moods. I love Will, and I am dearly thankful that you love him

as well. I always wanted this place to be the place the family came to--like it used to be. I wanted to see all the sunbrowned naked babies playing in the water, and the teenagers playing- kick the can, and I spy. It is a very lonely place now. There is no more extended family here. Someday you and Will can give it back life."

Andrea began to cry. She went off to her room. Thunder rolled to the south and the lake turned nearly black in the clouds reflections. Gretchen and Will stood on the porch, holding hands and staring down the lake at the rising storm. "Maybe he'll get hit by a bolt of lightning, maybe his boat will explode and maybe....shit Gret I have come to hate him."

She did not reply. Down the lake the hull of George's boat chiseled a wake into the dark water. The throttle was open full, and even in the rising wind the purring throaty roar of the engine could be heard. Fat drops of rain began to spatter the window. Lightning flashed far to the south and lit the mountains in a blueblack glow. Will released Gretchen's hand and went to the back hall to fetch his rain gear. "Where are you going?" she asked softly.

"It'll be worse for us all if I don't help him."

George brought the boat in too quickly to the mooring and overshot his mark. He cursed aloud, and though the birches on the shore strained against the wind, and the rain began to thrum upon the lake and the house, Will heard the anger in his father's voice. George struggled with his mooring line and then hastily tossed his gear into the small rowboat. He pulled the canvas cover over the boat as another peal of thunder echoed up the lake, and the sky to the south was rent by two slashes of lightning.

George struggled against the wind to pull the rowboat close to him and he nearly fell into the lake getting in. Finally he loosed the small boat from the mooring and began to row to the dock. Will grabbed the boat as his father drew alongside, but he said nothing. Will carried most of the gear into the house, leaving a trail of lake water behind him. George followed. Neither man spoke.

Once in the house Will hung up his jacket while George took his rain gear into the back hallway.

Will went to the porch and stood looking out at the lake, taking Gretchen's warm moist hand in his cool wet fingers. After a few silent moments George came onto the porch. Will spoke first. "Need a hand with anything Dad?"

"No. How did it go?"

"Great-I think I'll get an offer from one, if not both schools." Immediately Will regretted the optimism in his words, and cursed his lack of discipline.

"Any hope of long range employment?"

"Actually both positions might well be long term."

"Well it's your life."

George turned away and went to the kitchen. Gretchen squeezed Will's hand.

"Stay calm and we'll be just fine," she said as she patted his forearm.

"I will be calm as long as he is."

CHAPTER XVIII

Foxx eased the truck back onto the road. It steered much better and seemed to run smoother since he retrieved it from the garage. It did not ride as smoothly as the Jimmy he had ridden in to town in and wondered how much such a vehicle would cost. He hadn't liked Andrea's kid. Seemed a bit full of himself going off to get a job as a history professor. Kid knew a lot about fishing., Foxx thought, so he couldn't be all bad. The girl had interested him. She was darker than those Strangs and more like his own mother. Foxx wondered if the girl might be an Indian, but he thought her nose and cheeks were not those of a native woman. Still her darker complexion excited him. She had turned around in her seat to speak to him, and her smile was warm and real. Foxx remembered the soft strong curve of her calves, and the slope of her breasts and the green tanktop she wore. He wondered how much money you would need to have a girl like that.

As the truck groaned up nineteen mile grade on the Golden Road, Foxx turned on the radio. The static crackled and he felt the approaching storm in the cool rush of air from his vent. The mountains were dark and winterlike in the distance, and the bare trees bent and swayed in the wind. Foxx recalled all the women he had copulated with. He was confused by his memories and he could not separate his dreams from his actual fornications. He reckoned that he had actually been with seven women. As he tried to remember each one's face he could not. He could remember clothes and moles and scars, and he could remember places, cars and trucks, rooms and clearings. He could remember Helene who spoke French and only a few words of English. She

called him *cheri*, and cried like a child after every climax. He was sure she had been real, but he could remember little of the others. He recalled where he had met her and was startled to realize that he was driving near the spot. He had not been to the old lumber camp at Lac de Madeleine in fifteen years, and he believed it closed.

The truck crested the grade and Lac de Madeleine, somber and rippled with twisting breezes, lay before him in a mixture of sunlit shadow and dark foreboding waves. Gray driftwood lay along the shoreline like the carcasses of beached whales. Foxx eased the truck into four-wheel drive and turned north onto the road into the camp. The way was rutted and wet, and the truck crawled slowly over the heaves, and whined through the soft spots.

About a mile from the camp the paper company had erected a barway, but the lock was unhinged. Foxx swung the gate open and drove through. The road was worse beyond the barway, the ruts stony, and the humped crown thatched with sedge and brambles. The rusted and faded sign for Plourde Lumber, riddled with bullet and pellet holes, hung precariously over the road, and flapped in the rising wind.

Foxx stopped the truck in front of the dining hall, a long log and plank structure, and peered in a dirty fly-specked window. The room was empty and the long tables where the timber gangs ate were gone. He tried every door, but they were all nailed shut. The bunkhouses, workshops, tool sheds, storage buildings, and horsebarns were empty and boarded up. The trees had begun to reforest the clearings around the camp, and neglected roofs had begun to cave in and rot. Two dumptruck frames rotted in a small lot next to the workshed. Foxx raised the hoods and saw that the engines had been pulled.

The wind rose and sang in the narrow passages between the sagging buildings. Foxx slogged through the wet, dead, brush and brambles to the end of the camp and stood pensively before the small bunkhouse he had shared with the survey crew. Through the window he saw the four sagging iron beds, naked and dark, against the walls, where he had slept. He could not remember which one had been his when he knew Helene. He pressed his eyes to the glass, framing his face with his hands. Besides the four bed frames, the room had a small dresser, a small rough-planed table and a sturdy heavy-legged chair.

Foxx tried the door and it was nailed shut. He tried the one window in the front and it too was locked, but he found an unlocked window in the rear of the building. As the land sloped away from the building he could not reach the sill, and he dragged a small lichenous stump from a clump of moribund slash to a level spot just beneath the window. He pushed and wiggled the frame and it opened. With a great groan and a great straining of muscle and sinew, Foxx pulled himself up into the open window and slid face first into the one room cabin.

The cabin smelled of mothballs and sweat and damp rotting men. Foxx found the stub of a candle in a cracked dish on the table and lit it. The fatty yellowed wax slowly bore a flame, and the smudgy smoke filled the room with an ochereous light. Foxx dripped wax onto the dish and stuck the stub of the candle into it. He tried the dresser and could open only the top drawer-the others warped shut and without drawer pulls. He found a manual for a Kohler generator, a Plourde Lumber pencil, a plain white envelope, with a three cent stamp on it, and three girly magazines.

The magazines were tame compared to those he could buy in Nargate, but Foxx tucked them inside his shirt. He closed the rear window, but did not lock it, and blew out the candle. Next he unlocked the front window and slid out onto the ground in front of the cabin. He closed the window behind him.

Foxx drove out of the camp and locked the gate behind him. He resolved to return with his tools and remove the rest of the furnishings that he might be able to sell.

The day grew darker and Foxx saw the lightning streak the sky to the south. He drove slowly out to the Golden Road and pulled over to the roadside at Thief Stream Bridge. As he leafed through the pages of one of the magazines a small file card fell out onto the seat of the truck. Foxx read-Helene LaRose, 19 Rue du Fortress, St. George Sud, Quebec, Canada, startled to see the words written in his own hand. He closed his eyes and tried to hear her phlegm gargling voice, smell her wood smoke scented hair, and see her wide-mouthed grin with its missing tooth.

He became aroused. Foxx began to think of things too quickly, and he could not concentrate on any idea for very long. He wondered if he should try to find Helene-it would not take too long to get to St. George Sud, but he knew it had been a long time, and he seemed to recall hearing once that Helene had gotten married. Women, naked and half-dressed spun before his eyes. He pondered driving to Millinocket where he once knew a prostitute, but he knew those places had been closed up for a long time.

Sitting in the truck staring into space, the magazine open on his lap, Foxx closed his eyes and tried to remember the details of Helene's face, her body, and the

sound of her voice. He could only see swirls of light and he was startled by a loud clap of thunder. Foxx started the truck and turned onto the Golden Road, but he did not go toward home. He instead drove back toward Millinocket, the looming presence of Katahdin high over his left shoulder.

CHAPTER XIX

Andrea worked assiduously at staying calm and cheerful. She tried not to chatter too much, or speak of things likely to exacerbate the muted tension at Mary's Point. George read the newspapers Will and Gretchen had brought from Nargate and Boston. Gretchen read a journal and Will read a novel. Andrea brought cheese and crackers and other hor d'oeuvres from silent reader to silent reader, dipping with the skill of a veteran waitress, and offering to replenish glasses and plates, while the quiet grew palpable. Several times she left the porch feigning a need to check the roast beef that could be heard sizzling in the oven, and took a deep draught from a glass of dark wine.

The cool rawness of the afternoon was muted by the warmth from the oven. In the warm months they generally cooked outside to avoid heating the house, but on cold and rainy days the giant old gas oven was summoned to heat as well as cook. The uneasy truce was broken quickly when George, reading an article in the Wall Street Journal, snorted out abruptly and viciously, "Says here that the average cost of a college education has gone up three times faster than inflation. Now how can that be Will when the job pays so poorly?"

Will did not look up from his book, but answered only, "I don't know Dad."

"Well in your place I would damn sure want to know. Christ if my firm kept taking in more money, but I was not getting my share, I would want to know why."

"I guess your business is just much different from mine."

"What does that mean...your business?"

“Nothing Dad--I’m just saying that I don’t know how law firms work, but I know that much of the costs schools face today did not exist in the past.”

George cultivated a sarcastic tone in his voice, lowered the paper and said, “Well what might those be?”

“ADA stuff--handicapped accessibility, gender equity in sports, competition for the best students, the burden to maintain cutting edge computer and scientific equipment is daunting, the world changes very quickly. Dorms have to be equipped with modern sprinkler and alarm systems--I’m sure there’s plenty I cannot even imagine. Besides almost no kid pays the full freight just those who can afford it.”

“Just the ones whose father’s earned the money to afford it right? The blacks and the Puerto Ricans can go to Harvard for free, but the white kid has to pay.”

“I don’t know,” Will replied coldly and with his jaw set. Gretchen looked at him her face drawn in fear. “I guess that is one area I will need to investigate a little further. I’ll read the article later. Mom need any help out there?”

From the kitchen Andrea replied, “I could use some help with the salad.”

Will and Gretchen rose to go to the kitchen. George barked at Gretchen, “Well Gretchen, what do you think?”

“About what?”

“About this college mess!”

“I think it’s a complex issue. I think things go in cycles. I know Will will be an incredible teacher.” She started to go toward the kitchen and stopped, then said in very measured tones, “You know...whenever you hear a great person interviewed, a

Noble winner, or a great actor, or any successful person, and they're asked who was their greatest influence, most often they say it was a teacher."

George snorted and did not reply, but began to read again. Will and Gretchen continued into the kitchen where Andrea stood before the counter drying lettuce with a handtowel. Her face was struck with dark grief. She hugged Will and patted Gretchen on the head. In a low voice she said, "Thank you," to them both.

Andrea handed Will a bottle of wine and a corkscrew. He opened it and Andrea poured herself and Gretchen a glass. Will stood quietly and looked out into the darkening day and said softly, "He's goddamned lucky we're not here alone, or I'd kill the son of a bitch." Andrea grabbed his hand in hers and tears brimmed in her eyes. "I am so proud of you Will. You guys should leave tomorrow. It isn't worth the fight. He ignores me, he can't be civil, no less nice, to anyone. I'm through fighting the battle. I will not let his bitterness make me bitter too. I can't stand waiting for the explosion, always waiting, always afraid. When I get back home I am going to ask him to leave, or I am going to get a place of my own. This morning while he was out fishing I called Ted Grimes, he's an attorney at home. Ted is going to start a divorce action. I had spoken with him last Fall--but I said I wasn't sure. Now I am sure. I'm worn out guys. I want a place where we can get together and be happy--a room of one's own--as Virginia Woolf would say. I am unable to be a prisoner anymore. It's worse here. This is my home, my camp, my memories. I love Mary's Point.... Let's try to get through tonight."

Will hugged his mother and then Andrea pulled Gretchen close to her. "You'll be fine Mom," the younger woman whispered. "We'll all be okay."

CHAPTER XX

The morning was cool and glowering. Summer sat at her typewriter but did not work. She watched Dorian finish the fence around the garden. The mountains and the lake were hidden by clouds and a drizzly bank of fog. The stove crackled and Summer sat with her elbows on the table thinking about the wolf. She had not dreamed of him in two nights--she had not dreamed at all.

Dorian worked deliberately. He wore thick work gloves and wielded pliers and wire cutters dexterously. The fence was a bit over five feet high with a cantilevered top that jutted out at an angle. It looked like the fence atop a prison wall. The doorway was low and Dorian had to stoop to enter. He shook the great wire and mesh frame, stood back and admired his work in the soggy dirt of the garden.

Summer gazed distractedly at her husband. Two vehicles went past the window coming from Mary's Point, and splashed in the puddles. Dorian began to gather the tools he had been working with into an empty joint compound bucket. He stopped, stood back from the garden, and looked at his work. When he had gathered all the hand tools into the bucket he came onto the porch and set the bucket down. He opened the door and Summer felt the cool wet morning invade the cabin. Dorian stood in the doorway taking off his boots. "Well, if they get in now, they can have the damn stuff. They shouldn't be able to dig under, or jump over."

"That's great Dor. Now as long as it doesn't snow we'll be fine. Close the door it's freezing."

He closed the door and dropped his wet boots on the floor with a thud.

“Going fishing?”

“No. Too much feed in the water with all the rain. It won’t be very good until some sun gets on the river. How’s the story going?”

“It isn’t. I think I’ll read some. What are your plans?”

“Don’t have any. I can’t work in the garden--it’s too wet. I think I may read as well.”

When the fog rose, and the sun broke through the gloom, the peaks of the mountains gleamed with new snow. The wind began to swing from the northwest to the south and the day warmed quickly, the wet grass shining in the high June sun. Summer let the fire die, and by late morning the cabin was warm and the dampness was gone. The whiteness had receded from the high peaks. The crows began quarreling, and the kingfisher once again darted across the cove. Boats hurried down the lake towards the islands.

Dorian and Summer moved out onto the porch and sat in the sunshine. Two chubby children walking a large black dog passed the cabin going towards Mary’s Point and the camps along the upper road. The dog strained to sniff each stone and tree trunk at the edge of the road and a flabby young girl, in flip-flops and pink shorts, jerked the leash calling, “Reuben, heel”. The young dog pulled ahead and pulled the girl with her. Her companion, a girl of about the same age giggled every time her friend nearly slipped, and then howled with a screeching delight when the friend fell in a puddle losing her flip-flop. The dog broke away and the other girl chased the dog, who managed to stay a few feet away from her. The first girl rose awkwardly from the muddy puddle wiping her hands on her stained sweatshirt, and screaming at the

dog to stop. Trailing its leash the dog came up onto the porch and nuzzled Dorian and Summer, burying its nose in Summer's crotch.

"Easy boy," she said. "Easy now," and gently grabbed his collar. The dog immediately sat at her feet and stared at Summer with doleful eyes, his tail wagging, and his rictus wet and drooling. The two girls scrambled up to the porch and the muddy one spoke.

"Sorry lady, but he don't behave too good."

Summer was vigorously rubbing the dogs head and he was trying to push his snout into her legs. "He's a nice dog. Is his name Reuben?"

"Yep. He's my cousin's dog from Rhode Island."

"And where are you from?" Summer asked softly, staring at the two pudgy girls.

The muddy one answered first. "I'm Gina. I'm from Garland and this is my friend Eliza and she's from Etna. It's easy to remember, Gina from Garland and Eliza from Etna."

Dorian read, absorbed in his book. Summer handed the muddy girl the end of the leash. "Goodbye Reuben. Don't pull the girls into any more mud puddles will you?"

The dog looked sorrowfully at Summer and resisted the muddy girl's pull, slowly yielding and trying to run ahead. Both girls yelled at the dog, but the animal tried vainly to scamper away. "Nice dog."

"Yes, Sum, he is a nice dog, and no I don't think we can get one anytime soon."

"I wasn't saying anything about getting a dog--I was just feeling a little sorry for that one."

"Why?"

"I don't know. He seemed to want affection, and those kids only yelled at it. I just hate to see dogs treated like that."

"They're just kids. The dog looked plenty friendly and socialized to me."

"He had big sad eyes."

"All labs and lab mixes have big sad eyes Summer. He looked like he was just fine to me."

"But don't you ever wonder what animals are really thinking?"

"Plants maybe, but animals never."

"I'm serious. Do you think all animals act only on instinct?"

"All animals. Even humans are creatures of instinct. I don't imagine dogs think much.. remember maybe...but I don't believe that they think much."

"Wolves have to think. I hear that they hunt in packs and are very clever about how they bring down game."

"Instinct. It's automatic. They find the weakest prey and then they exhaust it by taking turns chasing it. A healthy deer or moose can always out run a wolf. Memory tells the wolf which deer to chase--the very young, or the very old, or the one that limps. Memory tells them to do it as a group."

"Except...the deer the wolf killed here *was* thinking. It came to get food left for it. It thought it was safe here, and then the wolf killed it."

Dorian put down his book and sighed. "It's the same thing. The deer remembered that the food was there..."

Summer interrupted. "Isn't remembering thinking?"

"Thinking is analysis. Easy food is memory, instinct and survival, but if you prefer to call it thinking I surely don't mind. You find the idea more riveting than I do."

Dorian's condescension annoyed Summer and she grew silent. She wished he would go fishing. "I think I'll go for a walk," she said rather sharply.

"Want some company?"

"No, not really."

Summer walked to the store and bought a sweet, very frozen, ice cream sandwich, which she bit into firmly. She chatted with Lydia who asked about the garden. "That's some fence Dorian's been putting up. He just might get a meal or two out of that garden yet. He might wanna borrow Old Michael from Ethel."

"Who's Old Michael?"

"When we tried to grow tomatoes on the deck, and Ethel's damn deer took to eating them, she made up a scarecrow. She called it old Michael because it looked like Mike Dowling's senior picture in high school. I have no idea who Mike Dowling is, but Ethel swore her scarecrow was the spitting image of him. She left him here to guard the porch, but he was of no use--guess the deer thought he was one of Ethel's kin. Might work over to your place though."

"I'll ask Dorian about it, but he seems pretty sure he's already won the battle."

“Well I wish him luck. You get some good tomatoes and I’ll trade you all the ice cream you want for some. Nothing tastes as good as fresh ripe garden tomatoes, except maybe fresh sweet corn.”

“I agree with that Lydia. I truly do.”

Summer walked slowly back past the camp and on along the road toward Mary’s Point. For a moment she wondered when Lydia had seen the fence. Did she walk early? Did someone tell her about it? Perhaps Foxx? Summer was briefly annoyed. She strode with her head down looking at the prints in the muddy road.

Dorian, his nose in his book, and chewing on his mustache, did not notice her pass in front of him. A few hundred yards up the road she veered off on an old path that led up a small rise to a giant boulder. The path was well worn, and as she walked she noticed deer and moose scat, small wildflowers, and new green shoots of brushy shrubs, breaking through the damp earth.

When she got to the boulder she climbed up and looked out over the lake to the high peaks. She saw two loons cruising about fifty yards off the shore, fishing and diving, disappearing and resurfacing, thirty yards away. The lichenous rock was cool beneath her bare feet and her toes sunk into the moss. Summer closed her eyes and tried to recall the wolf’s words, but heard only the loons and the buzz of deerflies.

CHAPTER XXI

Lobo lay glumly, his snout on his forepaws, on a flat rock beneath a small stand of dreeping spruces and watched his mate. She watched the pups playing in the wet field. His stomach growled with satisfaction. His mate and his children had begun to hunt on their own, and he had eaten a red squirrel and a partridge the evening before. Food was plentiful in the narrow gore, and his mate had been rejuvenated by hunting. She still ran with a limp, but did not whimper when she drove hard off her hip.

At dawn they had unsuccessfully chased three does. The pups had been confused and the smallest deer had eluded them by zigzagging across the open field and bounding into a deep thicket. They wrestled with each other as soon as the quarry had disappeared. Lobo's mate ran as best she could, but no match for the speed of the deer before her fall, she could not pursue the young doe in the woods. Lobo knew that the pups would learn in time. In time their hunger would reveal their own skills.

His mate raised her nose into the wind and half rose. She waited for an instant, then with a deep sigh and sniff, lowered herself back down. The pups played and romped in the wet field, bugs hatched in the bright June sun and swirled around the heads of the pups, who snapped at them with relish. They chased birds and butterflies to no avail, and nosed the ground for mouse trails and scat.

Lobo rose and circled. He lifted his nose to the wind, now southerly and warm. He moved away from the trees and out into the emerging sunlight and circled and lay down again. He looked down the gore toward Quebec. The mountain's

highest peaks glowed with snow, and he narrowed his eyes against the glare. Kettles of hawks rose in the sky above him as the sun heated the earth and birthed spinning thermals. A breeze shook the rain from the trees.

The pups tired, and one by one, they, too, lay still in the sun. Clouds built up over the lake and the breeze stirred whitecaps on the dark water. In the distance the rush of a brook, swollen with the night's rain drowned out the whine of the mosquitos, and the noise of the crows, and the far off, *killy-killy-killy* of the hawks. Lobo remembered Canada. He looked at his sleeping mate who lay on her side. Her injured leg twitched in her sleep, and she spoke a whimper in her dreaming. Lobo watched the bellies of his children rise and fall, and with each respiration he was proud.

Lobo rose and trotted out into the gore marking stumps and rocks as he made his way to the brook. Crows swooped above him scolding him as he crossed the field. He drank deeply from a pool in the swollen stream, the sound of his lapping drowned out by the rush of the dark water.. Moving down the narrow gore marking and signing his domain, the big wolf flushed a rabbit and several birds, but his belly was full and he gave no chase.

He could smell and sense no man in the gore. The air in the valley was sweet and wet--it smelled of earth and feces and his own scent. He fought an urge to howl and scratched at the wet ground. He nosed up a small hill into hardwood forest and shied at a small clearing. A small cabin lay in ruins, blackened by fire and crushed by the weight of winter snow. He still could not smell man, but he turned and trotted back down into the gore, marking stumps and trees.

Lobo walked slowly along the edge of the gore back to the meeting place, the wind at his back. His mate found his scent in the wind and rose slowly and stiffly to meet him. She nuzzled his snout and the pups slept. Lobo remembered Canada, and he remembered the long skulking trek across the broad agricultural valleys, that turned again to deep woods in Maine.

He and his mate had often eluded man and his machines by sleeping in hedgerows during the short late-winter days, and roaming with the bright moon. Foxes and squirrels, some rabbits and winter weakened deer, had fed them. Lobo had twice stalked farm yard sheep, but the scent of man, and the howls of his brother dogs had driven him to cover.

The pups stirred and yawned; circled and returned to sleep. Lobo watched his mate through half drawn eyes until he, too, slept.

CHAPTER XXII

Foxx awoke with a start. There was nothing familiar to the room, and his mouth was parched and cracked. His throat ached with the heavy sleep of a snoring drunk, and his throat was swollen. Closing his eyes, he tried to recall where he was. He remembered flashing lights and loud music. He remembered the lithe strippers and the cigarette smoke. He vaguely recalled driving his truck up a long, rutted, frost-humped road, and remembered a bone jarring pothole that nearly bounced him off the seat.

After a few unsteady moments he recalled the large woman in the capri pants, and her dark gash of a mouth. Foxx rolled to one side and looked about the room. It was a small dark room with drawn shades, a beaten and shabby dresser, a sagging wing chair with its stuffing protruding from several tears in the upholstery. The bed clothes smelled of sweat and perfume. Foxx was still partially dressed, his body was chafed with dried sweat, and smelled badly. As he tried to move his head throbbed both dully and with a streaking pain at the temples. His boots lay on the floor in a tangled mess, mud-spattered and scuffed, his hat was sitting half-crushed on the chair, and the door to the rest of the trailer was ajar.

Foxx rolled to his face and sighed deeply. He could recall nothing of the night. He tried to remember the woman's name or face, but he could only remember that she was large and heavy-breasted. She wore a lowcut shirt and he remembered trying to stare down at her tanned cleavage, wrinkled and red like a sun-dried tomato. Her face eluded him, but he could hear her laugh, a raucous, mucousy, deep-throated laugh,

that before erupting into great wheezing coughing spells, had reminded him of Helene's.

Her breath had been sour with cigarettes and gin. Foxx could also taste the beer and rye he had drunk at the bar. He remembered the dancer who had slapped him for thrusting his fingers too deeply into her G-string, as he pushed a greasy dollar bill into her crotch. He remembered being yelled at and challenged, and the large woman holding his hand and cursing.

It was when he had been slapped that the woman had begun to talk nicely to him. He could remember no more. He became suddenly afraid. He did not like being alone in the strange room. He feared that he might be beholden to a stranger.

Foxx searched his pants for his wallet and found it. He tried to raise up enough to get it from his back pocket. He struggled to pull the sweaty leather pouch from the buttoned pocket of his work pants. Foxx counted a ten and two fives, and it seemed to him that he could not possibly have spent the other forty-dollars he had had when he went into Millinocket. Robbery seemed unlikely to him, and he cursed himself for his drinking. It had been a very long time since Foxx had been drunk. He felt the very rise in his gut and he swallowed hard.

Warily he rose, put on his clothes and boots, grabbed his hat, and began to steal quietly from the room. The door opened into a narrow hall and Foxx could not remember which way to turn. He went left and into the living room. The woman sat in a chair smoking, the television was on, but barely audible. Her face was streaked and lined in the flickering light of the tube, and Foxx could see she had been

coughing or crying. He did not speak. He had no language, and his throat was raw and dry. He needed to use the bathroom.

“Shitter’s on the left, needledick”, the woman said, pointing with her cigarette and pulling her robe up to her throat while shifting her massive legs beneath her. Foxx looked to his left and mutely went into the bathroom. He sat down and tried to stifle a loud burst of gas, and reached over to run the sink. He finished shitting and washed his hands and face, he ran his wet fingers through his greasy hair. He squeezed some toothpaste from a nearly empty tube onto his finger and ran it across his teeth--the sweetness leaving him nauseous. He went out into the hall.

The woman still sat in the chair smoking. Foxx paused and tried to think of something to say. The woman snarled at him. “Well, you sure turned out to be a limp dick. You one of them deep woods bachelor rump wranglers?”

“What do you mean?” Foxx asked quietly.

“I mean are you a fudge packer, a queer, a faggot? You sure as hell can’t get it hard for a woman. You talk a big game, but you’re just a little butt pirate.”

Foxx grew angry and felt the bile rising in his throat. “Listen you fat sow...”

“Fat sow? I oughta kick your fairy ass you sorry bastard,” the woman said rising up from the chair. She opened her robe. She wore only a small pair of blue panties, her breasts were round and unfettered with large nipples like wrinkled pencil erasers. Her belly was streaked with lines, and her navel was a purplish cavern.

“Any real man would walk across broken glass on his fuckin’ knees to get a chance to suck on these titties, but I gotta pick the one momma’s boy in the crowd. Just my friggin’ luck. I save your ass from getting’ beat by the bouncers and whatta I

get. A soft dick too small to use for bait. Get outta here, pansy.” The woman began to cough as she clutched her robe back around her fleshy frame. Foxx wanted to say something but he could not. Shame burned in his heart. The woman steadied herself against the chair, her massive body wracked with coughing and heaving. She pointed toward the door, but Foxx could not move. When he opened his mouth all he could say was, “I don’t know your name,” he paused and added, “I don’t usually drink nothin’ at all.”

The woman coughed deeply and harshly, and she pounded on her chest with a closed fist. With her other hand she lifted an inhaler to her pouty mouth, and struggled to draw on it.

Foxx stepped toward her thinking he should aid her, but he did not know how. When he came within arm’s reach she swung her massive paw and back-handed him across the mouth. He recoiled, stunned, and tasting salty blood in his mouth. Her eyes, violent and red, glared at him as she coughed and stumbled helplessly--always pointing at the door with one hand.

Foxx stepped forward and smashed his fist into her belly twice, and she gasped and fell. Her body crashed to the floor and the trailer shook. Foxx felt the contents of his stomach rising and he fled through the door and out into the cool damp morning.

Foxx looked around and saw no other house. He wretched. His truck sat parked under a dripping hemlock. He could not recall driving into the lot. He retched again in the dooryard. Foxx stumbled back inside and the woman was sitting in the chair sucking deeply on an inhaler. She tried to speak. She mouthed the words “You

bastard”, to Foxx and he grinned. He could see that she was weakened, perhaps dying, as he stood before her. Her streaked hair hung haphazardly around her jowly face. She gasped and snorted for air. Her eyes, angry and flushed, pleaded for Foxx to leave, but he did not go.

With both hands he pulled the woman to the floor, her inhaler spinning off into a dark corner of the trailer, and with enormous effort ripped the robe from her huge body. Her eyes grew wild and she tried to scream but could not summon enough air. She tried to kick him as he tore her underwear free and tried to force his fingers inside her. He raised his hand to strike her and she yielded in fear, covering her face with her fleshy arms. He opened his fly. Brutally and quickly he forced himself on her, yelling obscenities, and squeezing the flesh on her shoulders until it bruised.

When he finished, Foxx sat in the chair and watched the woman gasp and weep on the floor. She tried to pull the robe over her quivering flesh, but Foxx pulled it away. “Hit me you fat bitch! Seems you oughtta leave them damn cigs alone. Don’t ever call me a faggot...where’s the rest of my money at?”

The woman did not move and could not speak. She closed her eyes and waited to be struck again. Foxx rose up and looked about the room. He saw the woman’s purse on a small table and he fished through it for her wallet. She had only three dollars. “Well maybe I did spend it all,” he said softly, “My head hurts enough for fifty dollars worth of booze”. He looked carefully at the contents of the wallet. “Lorraine Mishouette,” he spoke her name with difficulty. “Dumb frog pig. I coulda killed you and nobody woulda heard me at all.” Foxx stood above the woman who wept noiselessly, her body goose-fleshed and flush. Foxx tossed the robe to her,

adjusted his hat on his head, and sat down in her chair. “If I didn’t have things to do I’d stay and take the time to do you right, ‘til you was screaming for more, but I gotta go.”

Foxx rose, tipped his hat, left the trailer and started his truck. It was a long drive down the muddy road, and he passed some old camps, and an old blue school bus with small birch trees growing out the broken windows. The road ended at another road just like it, and by following the contour of the hills Foxx made his way to the Golden Road.

Suddenly panicked, Foxx decided not to go directly home in case the woman knew his name and called the police. Foxx doubted she would. For a moment he imagined she was grateful to him for the sex he had given her. He had not noticed if she had a phone. He tried to recall the details of the trailer, but he could not. Reaching behind his head Foxx felt the cool stock of his rifle on the rack. Opening the glove box, then fishing around blindly with his right hand, he found the box of shells and put them on the seat beside him. “Fuck with Sly Foxx fat bitch? I don’t think so,” he shouted pounding the dash with his left hand.

Driving over the bumpy road, Foxx remembered the queasy feeling he had in school when he could not say what he knew. His stomach churned, his breath was sour to him, and he rode with the windows open to the cool air.

Foxx spoke out loud vacillating between fear and self-assuredness. At one moment he would be nearly paralyzed with fear, and at others completely dismissive of any threat. “She fucking asked for it,” he snarled aloud. He cursed the fat woman

and left out a great whoop into the air. "Fuck you you frog bitch-call me a faggot you fat fuckin' whore!"

At Plourde Camps Foxx turned off the road and parked at the barway. He was ravenously hungry, but fatigued and uneasy. Foxx walked into the camp and wandered around in the ghostly fog until his legs grew slumberous and heavy.

He sat for a bit on a stump and kicked at the remains of an old bottle with his boot. His breath was labored and sour. The ache in his stomach was dulled, and the lump in his mouth from the fat woman's blow was raw and ragged. He rolled the stringy flesh with his tongue until it began to fall away from the inside of his cheek. Foxx chewed the loose skin as it fell away and swallowed it hungrily.

Wearily, Foxx trudged back to the truck, his pants legs wet, and his boots heavy. The sky glowered and his nostrils swelled slightly with the scent of rain. His clothes seemed stiff and grimy against his skin. Thunder rolled distantly in the southeast. The dessicated sedge sung in the stiffening breeze, and new, green, shiny, shoots emerged from each clump.

Foxx reached the truck exhausted and sore. His own odors sickened him. From within the glovebox he pulled a stash of limp napkins and went into the woods and squatted and shat. The gas blasted from him and burned his anus. Like a dog he kicked leaves over his droppings. It was late in the afternoon. Foxx looked at his watch and discovered it had broken during his assault on the fat woman. He pulled some clean underclothes from his pack and changed.

In the truck Foxx fished his stash of magazines from under the seat. He liked the older ones he had found at the camp, though their mustiness made him sneeze.

The less explicit pictures aroused him more than the closeups of genitalia. He liked the older models who were fleshier and more matronly looking. Foxx did not read the modern letters or advice columns. Foxx liked the older stories, stories where uppity women were put in their place, or became submissive with rough talk and firm handling.

He had handled the fat woman well. She wanted it and he gave it to her brutally, and he had shown her who was boss. No woman could cow him. The fat woman had hit him. He had never hit a woman before, but remembering the feel of her flesh beneath his fist confused him. He wondered why his instinct had been to strike her there, and not in the face.

Foxx flipped nervously through the magazines. He tried to read a story called, *The Wife Tamer*, but in the low light he had to hold the magazine too close to his face, and the mouldy paper made him sneeze. He put the old magazine down and tried to read an article on trucks in one of the new ones. His eyes could not focus and he fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXIII

The fight began quickly and viciously. George had been drinking gin and picking at his salad when he attacked. Will had smashed a plate in anger and yelled at George. The cruelty of George's remark, the sudden vicious tone of his voice, and the direct challenge to Will had incited Gretchen as well.

"You aren't some fag Episcopal priest with a trust fund and your mother's underwear hidden under the mattress," George had snarled venomously, "You're my son, and you have to do something besides teach fucking history to pampered little shits from Westchester, and the Main Line. Get some balls, Will, for christsakes. I know a little bit more about life than you do. Don't waste your whole life boffing co-eds and faculty wives, and going to endless meetings where nothing is at stake. I didn't invest so much in you to have it all thrown back into my face--and you girly," he said wagging an accustory finger at Gretchen, "should wise up as well..."

Will was inflamed by the threatening gesture his father made toward Gretchen. He had risen up smashed the plate and threatened to smash his father as well. Andrea screamed and sat immovable, stunned and stupified. She had underestimated the depth of her son's anger, and been astounded by the volume of his rage, so long suppressed. For a brief moment the room seemed frozen in a flash of lightning.

George had threatened to disown Will who had in turn stormed out with Gretchen. Andrea had begged for peace, but understood slowly that her life was changed forever. There was a breach, a chasm, which could never be forded or

bridged. George had ranted and Will had simply gathered Gretchen and his belongings, and ceased speaking to anyone. Gretchen had mutely agreed. When George asked her why she would not ask Will to stay, she simply replied, "I think it is best we go."

"Can't you make him see I'm right?"

"I do not believe that you are right George—I believe you're jealous."

"Jealous? Jealous of what? Him? Jesus that's rich!"

Will raced about the camp gathering his things while George called out insults and sarcastic apologies. He went into the kitchen and calmly made another drink, all the while talking out loud as if someone was listening. "Try to offer some good advice and they jump down your throat. Try to set 'em right and they don't care. They know every goddammed thing."

Gretchen was the first one ready and she and Andrea went out to the field to wait for Will. They stood holding hands like old friends.

"Mom. I'm sorry. Why don't you come with us?"

"I can't. I don't know what to do," she sobbed, "he is such a bastard. I can't leave now. This is my place. I won't give him the satisfaction of driving us all away. He won't be back here again, that I can assure you."

"Really, come with us."

"No. Not yet. But we'll come back here, you, me Will..."

The two cars drove away from Mary's Point into the threatening late afternoon storm clouds, splashing through puddles and staining their fenders with mud.

Andrea lay a long time on her bed sobbing. She locked the door and when George sought to enter she threatened to kill him if he came near her. Through the door he called her sick and stupid, and defended himself. "I'm the only one around her with any fucking sense-I try to be helpful and all I get is shit. You'd all be up shit's creek without me."

Andrea did not reply. All the words and complaints welled in her and she felt like a clogged hose. The years of tension raged in her blood and she resolved to leave him forever. She begged God to give her the strength to maintain her resolve. She replayed moments from the past, cold terrified moments when she could not find the courage to leave, or to even speak up and fight. She would not lose her son and she would not lose his young woman.

George went out to the great porch and made another drink. He searched his heart for an error or a mistake, and found none.

CHAPTER XXIV

Foxx awoke to a cloudburst. The rain thrummed violently on the truck in a long sonorous, and, then at times, deafening roll. The windows fogged quickly and he started the engine. The warmth of the defroster brought a shudder to him and he could not recall having been so weary. He closed his eyes and thought about the fat woman, feeling safe and clear of her. If she was not dead she would not say a word about him, he was sure of that. He would have been too ashamed in her place and could not imagine her being less so. If she was dead, he would claim that he had had sex with her several times and had left after she asked him to go in the morning. He tried to recall phone poles on the road into her trailer, or a cell phone among the shabby furnishings of the dark trailer. He could remember little but rage and confusion.

The encounter seemed long ago to Foxx. Shards of lightning rent the dark sky, and the water seemed to be poured on the earth from a great bucket. The darkening day boomed with thunder, and the rain sang on the hood of the truck like a million marbles poured down a granite staircase.

Foxx was parched. He took an old styrofoam coffee cup, and held it out the window. He swirled rainwater around the cup and picked at the mocha stains with his fingertips. Pleased with the cups new cleanliness he let the rain pour in and fill it up. He drank greedily and filled the cup again from the torrent. Water splattered the dash and the seat and his lap. His arm was soaked. he could not see beyond the nose of the hood. The water was cold and unnerved an old filling in Foxx's mouth. He winced and cursed softly but filled the cup again.

The storm persisted and the ground muddied, dark rivulets ran alongside the truck and down the gravel road toward the Golden Road.

Foxx paged through one of the magazines and tried to read a story, but could not concentrate. He felt suddenly vulnerable, and when the rain and wind slackened, almost imperceptibly, he nosed the truck down the tote road and onto the Golden Road. He still could not decide which way to go, but finally felt that he should go home, where he could eat and bathe and sleep. Foxx drove slowly and was startled by a new Ford F150 that passed him throwing mud across his windshield. Foxx cursed and started his wipers, which at first only smeared the calcified mud, making his vision worse. The rain fell hard and soon washed the windshield clean.

Foxx passed a painful burst of gas and opened the window. The rain slashed in and he quickly rolled the window back up. The truck seemed to shimmy and wander, but he decided it was only his sleepiness and the wet road, not another mechanical trouble. He paused for several minutes when the rain came again in hard gusts and his vision was obscured.

Several miles later, Foxx saw the truck that had roared by him stopped at the side of the road behind two other cars, the rear wheel jacked up, and saw three more cars off on the shoulder on the other side, going eastbound. He was suddenly elated. Foxx judged that he could squeeze between the two lines of vehicles and accelerated, throwing mud on all six trucks and cars, and soaking two men changing the tire. In his rearview he saw them giving him the finger and threatening with their arms. He also saw a moose down on the shoulder, apparently struck by one of the cars. Again the cool stock of his rifle calmed him. Foxx thought about turning around and

challenging the men. He decided instead that he was too weary for another fight, and sped on dangerously fast over the slippery gravel.

CHAPTER XXV

Andrea began to pack. She stomped through Mary's Point red-eyed and hurt. George made two feeble attempts to reconcile with her, then began a litany of charges against her. She did not answer him. When he tried to take her by the elbow she pulled violently away and stared with ineffectual hatred. He laughed at her and belittled her anger. "He is just a spoiled boy--he'll be back tail between his legs.."

"Go fuck yourself, George. I'm leaving you for good. You're a mean self-centered asshole, and you're going to be a lonely bitter old man. You won't drag the rest of us with you. In the morning I am taking your precious boat to Nargate. I'll leave it at the dock--how you get it back is your affair. ..."

"You're being ridiculous. You couldn't drive that boat to Nargate..."

"*Do not* try to stop me. I will buy a car there if I cannot rent one. I am going home, moving you out and living the rest of my life with peace and dignity. I love my son, and I love Gretchen. You will not destroy that for me. I pity you George. You're a damn cliché and nothing more. "

"You couldn't take care of yourself if you tried..."

"Me? Where the fuck do you think you'd be if you hadn't married me--I tell you where, back in Lancaster chasing Amish buggy accidents and doing real estate closings. My father always thought you were a second rate intellect, not a bad day to day lawyer, but no Clarence Darrow either. Wonder why you didn't get the biggest cases? They didn't trust you. So get off your high horse. I thought you had some decency, but maybe you *were* just a damn golddigger."

George laughed, and said coldly, "You dumb, blonde, bitch."

Andrea walked away from him and began to fill her suitcases and bags with her belongings. She carried them to the porch and announced that one of them would be sleeping in the boathouse cabin. "Fine," he said, "I hope you like it there."

Andrea took her rain slicker from a nail on the door, took one of her small bags, and left the house. In the darkness and the cold damp of the cabin she sobbed until her stomach hurt, and she had no more tears to shed.

At first he thought it was the rain, but Foxx soon realized that a rear tire was going flat. The rain had intensified again and the lightning flashed in the west. He nearly hit a deer that sprang out of a small thicket near the road. Slowly, cautiously, he drove, staying far to the right, until he found a small turnout. Once again a sense of panic invaded his bowels. He feared that the men he had sprayed might pursue him. He pulled back into the road and looked for a tote road or even a moose run where he might be hidden from view. He could find none. Foxx waited for a respite from the driving wind and heavy rain. The hot air of the defroster made him logy and nauseous, yet without the fan up high he could not keep the windshield clean. Finally he resolved to shoot anyone who assaulted him. He took his gun down, loaded it and set it on the seat.

Using a tarp for cover, which nearly blew away before he fastened it down between the truck bed tie-downs and some rocks, and squatting on his haunches like a veteran prisoner, Foxx labored to change the tire. The side wall had been rent by a rock. It was ruined. The spare was nearly bald and not fully inflated. He

wondered if the rock that had taken his tire had pierced the one on the Ford truck as well.

It took most of the weary man's strength to retighten the lugs. He washed his hands with muddy sand and rinsed them in a puddle. The wind gusted and sought to tear the blue tarp from his hands as he tried to refold it.

In his fatigue, Foxx forgot the men he had splashed, and remembered only the heavy labored breathing of the fat woman, as his own breath came hard and raspy in his throat and chest. The bicep on his left arm ached with a dull consistent pain, and his knuckles had been scraped raw on his right hand. Foxx sucked slowly on the knuckle of his middle finger, the blood greasy and gritty and the jagged pieces of flesh chewy and pulpy. Involuntarily he rolled the last stringy piece of flesh inside his cheek that clung stubbornly to the rest of the meat in his mouth, and tried to bite it off. Each effort came in slow motion.

When the tarp was stored and the ripped tire stowed in the bed, Foxx slumped in the cab of the truck and felt his stomach surge with a quick dry heave. Afraid he might vomit, Foxx stuck his face out the window into the moist breeze. Anger welled in his stomach and fierce gas pains wracked his bowels. Foxx marveled that he could feel so dry, so fully dehydrated, in the midst of such moisture.

Foxx cranked the truck and the damp, mouldy, odor of the defroster wafted into his nose. He could not help but sneeze, and each sneeze brought the bile from his stomach into his throat. He nearly gagged. The raw flesh of his knuckles was hardening and the rough places in his scalp itched so that he rubbed them until they bled. A deer fly buzzed about the cab and Foxx smashed it when it landed on his

thigh, hitting the insect so hard that he stung his own flesh. The dark blood stained his work pants and Foxx wondered if some of it was his own. When the defroster had cleared the windshield Foxx opened the window half way and drove on toward Seemonus.

The truck wobbled a bit on the soft tire and Foxx drove slowly. He felt great relief as he drove, and listened to the hiss of his tires on the dirt and gravel. The wind was cool and wet and restorative. Leo felt his spirits rise, and he belched loudly, several times, barking the words “dumb frog bitch” through the windy burping. The road mud spun up from his front tire and splattered his elbow as it hung outside the truck.

Foxx wondered what he would say if he was connected to the woman. He felt clever and light. The truck cornered with difficulty and Foxx had to slow to a crawl in the snaky curves of Deadman’s grade, where the road rises swiftly and baldly above the river at Thief Rapids. Foxx let the truck fishtail up the grade, almost losing control twice, and peeked down at the swollen river as it crashed and roared below him. The great power of the raging water emboldened and relieved him. He blinked his dry eyes to moisten the reddened tissue, and ran his tongue over his cheek and teeth. The empty hunger of his belly rolled in him in peaceful waves, and even the healing flesh of his knuckles burned with pleasure.

At the top of the grade, where the road straightens and widens, rushing toward the Canadian border, he glimpsed the small ridge rising behind Seemonus. Patched with clearcuts, stands of native hardwood, and replanted conifers, the ridge looked

like a madman's game board. A clammy sickness settled into the weary man's bones and joints as he saw the distant shadow of his home.

Leo ached to tell someone. He could not decide who, among the living, he could tell. He yearned to tell his mother, and saw her face and the dried blood and the flies, as she lay in the boat. He saw his father raising the glinting axe high over his head and bringing it down, splitting the seasoned maple into stove wood for Mary's Point. He wanted to tell him that he had become a strong son. Foxx tried to conjure Helene, but recall only her mucousy laugh and missing tooth. For a brief moment he thought he could see her beside him in the cab, and he imagined he heard her voice, raspy and low, singing in French. Foxx blinked his dry eyes, and gripped the wheel until the wounds on his knuckles opened again, and the dark blood oozed from the pulpy cuts, and vowed aloud to find Helene.

As Foxx pulled the truck onto the Seemonus Road he was passed by Will Strang and then by the young dark-haired woman. A violent wave of gas nearly doubled him over at the wheel. His body seemed to itch everywhere at once, and each scratch seemed to open a scab and bring new blood. Foxx vowed to never touch liquor again. He closed his eyes, and the truck drifted silently to the shoulder of the road and stalled.

When Foxx awoke it was nearly dark. A cloudburst, short and furious, had roused him from a sleep of vivid and terrifying dreams of the fat woman.

In the incipient dark of the rainy evening Andrea lay drinking merlot from the bottle on a bed in the bunkhouse. Her sleeveless summer dress offered little cover and she burrowed deep into the bed for warmth. The cabin smelled of musty men and

mothballs. She shook and could not control the tremors of fright, and cold, and sadness. She cried silently as she recalled first holding her son, his forehead bruised from the forceps, and his squally face, wrinkled and red, staring close-eyed up at her. Andrea wept at the promise and wept at the reality of her life.

She realized that she was a remarkably unambitious woman. She could imagine no offense worthy of her misery. She had been faithful until betrayed. She had never thwarted her husband's movements or plans. In more than three decades she could remember refusing his advances only a few times.

Andrea felt that she had been dutiful. When her father had expressed doubts about George she had defended him rabidly and passionately. When the whispers of his shortcomings reached her ears she had refused to hear them. When he had wounded her with his unfaithfulness she had taken the counsel of her mother and aunt's who, no strangers to infidelity themselves, had urged her to accept the occasional wanderings of men as an inevitability of life. She could remember being bossy, but never unkind.

In the clammy darkness Andrea remembered Will as an infant, as a child, as a young man, and as the handsome man who tried in vain to secure, at the very least, a truce with his father.

For a brief moment Andrea imagined Mary's Point alive with Will and Gretchen's children, and pictured the lawn teeming with people, the great table groaning beneath a sumptuous feast, and laughter, riotous happy laughter, surrounding the camp. She cried and shook as she saw in her mind's eye, the genteel happiness of her youth, and recalled the endlessly sunny and warm days of summer's

past. A loon laughed and Andrea wondered how long it had been since she had heard George laugh, really laugh with delight, not just laugh at someone's misfortune, or at a cruel joke. She wondered how long it had been since she, too, had ceased to laugh. Andrea wondered when her husband had learned to hate so purely. She remembered her sisters and their husbands and her cousins, and imagined all of them, even those now dead, sitting on the lawn and swimming and playing games beneath the cobalt blue of a July afternoon. A familiar generosity warmed her like the first rush of good strong wine.

The room seemed to shrink. She had brought no lantern or matches, and she would not return to the mainhouse until the morning. Her thoughts turned to escape. After a hard, debilitating cry, staring at the cobwebbed ceiling imagining and then rejecting any hope for reconciliation, she rose and went to the window. The storms came in quick violent waves. The thunder rolled in long bursts and the sky was streaked with saw-toothed lightning. In the dark fury of the weather Andrea felt her husband's cruelty. Standing, wrapped in a blanket, confused by the wine, and the shabbiness of her hurt, Andrea vowed to bring laughter to Mary's Point.

With a sudden ghostly calm the storm ceased and the lake calmed. It was dark, not the deep dark of the moonless midnight, but a crueler, uneasier dark. In her rain slicker Andrea slipped out of the cabin and stared into the threatening sky. Resolving to walk to the campground, use the outhouse at the store, get some fresh water, buy a flashlight, and return to the cabin to sleep, she pulled on her rafting sandals, and shut the door behind her. Crossing the soggy grass in deliberate strides

she did not look toward the house. George sat looking out at the lake and did not see Andrea cross the lawn.

The world was hushed and only the drip of the trees and the soggy, hoarse, call of crows in the wet woods, reached Andrea's ears. Her feet were cold and shivers ran up her legs. She felt as unsteady as a new colt; her grief and the wine settled heavily in her. Mosquitos whined about her head and a deerfly bit her ankle. She stopped in the road to scratch the swelling bite. Andrea did not need to look up as she knew the road by heart. The calm was broken by a cool wind that shook buckets of water from the dark trees.

With unbridled fury the storm returned as Andrea passed the halfway point to the store. The wind tore the hood of her slicker away from her head and she quickly reached back and pulled it over herself. With one hand on her head, and one clutching the opening at her throat she trudged almost blindly on, her head down and her eyes half shut. Water bubbled over the road and over the top of the culvert where the tiny stream crossed the road to Mary's Point. Andrea waded the cold torrent and nearly fell. In stride she managed to pull the drawstrings tight on her hood and leaning into the wind hurried on toward the store. The rain drowned out the sound of the motor. For a brief instant she saw the sky and then only darkness.

Foxx knew he had hit something from the one solid banging noise, and the shudder it sent through his old truck. He feared he had hit one of the deer that Ethel Meadows fed. He stopped and got out of the truck and when the sky was lit by a bolt of lightning saw the body in the slicker. Foxx looked about furtively and cursed. Kneeling over the body he realized that it was Andrea. His mind burned and

the bile returned to his throat. The vision of the fat woman reaching for her inhaler flashed in his mind. With all that was left of his strength he lifted the body out of the mud, and pushed it into the bed of the truck. He knew she was dead. He drove quickly to his camp and in the deserted dooryard sat in the truck wondering what to do.

Strang was a lawyer and that scared Foxx. He couldn't arrive at Mary's Point with the man's dead wife. In his head he concocted a hundred escapes, a hundred disposal plans, and found them all wanting. He raged against the cruelty of his luck. He had done no wrong. She had been walking in the road in blinding rain. It was not his fault, yet he was sure it would be made his fault. He could never explain what happened. they would confuse him and make him say it was his fault. It would be like it was in school. Foxx pounded the dash with his fist and cursed.

In his shed there was a great wheelbarrow with a pneumatic wheel that his father had built from a kit. He pushed it through the muddy dooryard to the truck and wrestled Andrea's body out of the truck bed, into the wheelbarrow and up to the front steps. Then, pausing for time to gather his strength, he dragged her body inside the dark cabin, where he left the mute corpse dripping and puddling on the kitchen floor.

Foxx returned the wheelbarrow to the shed and locked the door with the padlock. The lock was old and balky. It wouldn't close without the key, and Foxx dropped the greasy key ring twice. It took all of his resolve to bend down and pick the keys up. His back ached and spasmed, and he drove his fist into the knot near the base of his spine.

Starting back toward the dark cabin, he rubbed the groove in the wet earth left by the wheelbarrow with the toe of his work boot, then, when he simply made the track wider, tried to erase the evidence with a rake from his shed. Soaked with rain and sweat and fear, he worked with a frantic energy. When he was satisfied with his work, and when he had returned the rake to the shed, he nearly fainted from exhaustion.

Inside the cabin Foxx lit a light and a lantern. He opened the hood of Andrea's rain slicker and looked for blood. He found none. Her blue-gray eyes were opened, and surprisingly clear and moist. Her lips were warm to the touch and her face was tanned.

Foxx removed the slicker and stared again at the body. The dress was damp and stuck to her skin. He was intrigued by the complete absence of jewelery from her ears, neck and fingers. Whenever he had seen her in the last ten years she had been wearing rings and bracelets, or bright gold necklaces and tortoisie shell barrettes. The ebb and flow of his emotions brought him often to the edge of shaking depression.

When he removed Andrea's dress her wedding ring fell noisily from the front pocket. He found a twenty dollar bill, moist and limp, at the bottom of the pocket. The length of the right side of her body was a long purplish bruise. There was no blood. The woman's underwear matched, it was a soft, blue, cotton, and it too was damp. Foxx studied the body carefully in the lantern's light, and his body cast shadows on the dark walls of the cabin, and across the supine corpse.

In the flickering and hissing light, Foxx recalled the dried blood and the flies and the startled look on his mother's face when she lay dead in the boat. The yellow and purple bruises around her eyes, like muted halos, tortured his memory. He needed

to tell someone that the death was a mistake, and that he was blameless for the corpse before him.

Andrea looked as if she was sleeping, as if she might be dreaming, though from her expression Foxx could gain no knowledge of what she may have dreamed. Sleep beckoned to him. His hands were pained from tugging the body, wrestling the tire, and from the raw scabbing wounds of his knuckles.

Pulling the underwear from Andrea's body, Foxx thought of the fat woman. He wished he still had the strength he had used up in assaulting her in defense of his manhood. With great effort he rolled Andrea over. A large bony knot protruded from the base of her neck. He reckoned she had died instantly.

Foxx admired the body. He ran his hands over her and contemplated having sex with the corpse. He knew she would be missed. The rain let up and he left her alone on the floor and went out to look at the front of his truck. He nearly fainted as he stood up and lingered a long moment holding onto the door frame. The dent was pronounced. The truck sat unevenly in the dooryard its equilibrium destroyed by the soft tire. For a brief exhausting instant he contemplated pumping the tire up in case he needed to use the truck quickly, but he had no strength for such a chore.

Foxx started a fire in the stove. He admired the body again. He ran his hands over her and noticed that the corpse was cooling. Again, he considered assaulting the body and was frightened by the impulse. He thought to redress her and to drive into Mary's Point and explain the accident, but he knew Strang would find a way to blame him. No man cowed Foxx more than George Strang.

The smoothness of her skin and the softness of her breasts excited him. He was pleased to see that Andrea's pubic hair was roughly the same color as the hair on her head. He remembered first seeing the triangle between her legs when he had spied on Andrea and George when he was a boy, and it had looked darker. At last he could run his hands over the body he had so often imagined.

The fire warmed the cabin quickly. When the stove was red hot, the damper wide and the flue drawing furiously in the rising wind, Foxx burned the rain slicker. The smell of the plastic made him queasy, but he followed the slicker with the sandals, that emitted the odor of burning tires. Next he burned the dress, turning it slowly with the poker, as if stirring pudding. When the dress was ash he burned the bra, and after pausing to wrap them around his erection, he burned the panties.

Foxx stroked himself slowly as he admired the body. He knew that he could not escape. He knew that he might have killed two women, and that his intentions would not matter. He had no power in the world, and he had no friends. He climaxed and fell into a deep sleep.

Book Three

*“ but the wicked will be cut off from
the land,
and the treacherous will be rooted
out of it.”*

Proverbs 2:22

CHAPTER XXVI

A strong northwesterly gust rattled the stove pipe and Foxx awoke in the predawn dark with a start. He smelled the dead fire and he smelled his own redolent flesh, annealed to his clothes, and he smelled the death in the room. An uncontrollable shaking and nauseating fear enveloped him. His testicles ached. His knuckles throbbed and his eyes were raw and dry.

His mind was incapable of sorting out his options. He looked at the naked and stiffening body of Andrea and contemplated where he should leave her. The rain had washed away any tracks he might have left with his truck and would have erased any sign of the accident. He needed to find a place where she could not be found. Foxx knew by the wind that the day would dawn bright and clear. The violence of the night had given way to a fresh breezy morning.

The June sun rises the highest in the summer sky, and the soggy forests and clearcuts, sedgy fields and sandy clearings, would soon dry out and become green.

Foxx contemplated several plans. The breeze blew hard and fresh, but the downdraft in his flue blew the cold ashy smell of the fire back into the sunless cabin.

Foxx reckoned could put the body in a stonewall where it would decompose quietly and slowly. Years would pass before anyone would find the bones. Only a dog, or coyotes, or perhaps a wolf, would seek the body under a pile of rocks. Slowly the mice would gnaw away the bones. In time she would decay, but first they might come with dogs. Andrea Strang would be missed.

He could, he thought, weight the body down with stones and drop it silently into the lake, but to do that he would have to wait until night gave him cover. It would be risky to try to drown the body unless he could make it look like an accident, but having burned her clothes he had ruined any chance of that. He cursed his stupidity. He thought of burning her, but he knew that would be impossible. His father had once tried to burn the remains of a moose he had killed with his truck. He had first butchered the best meat, and then tried to cremate the rest of the carcass. It had taken days, and even then fist-sized pieces of bone remained. Little Leo had been given the task of burying them in the woods behind the camp. Years later he had dug up some of the partially decayed bone, and remembered how long bone took to decompose.

Hiding her deep in the woods would work if he had no tire trouble or if no one saw the dent in the truck. No plan seemed well-conceived. He would be the first one the police would check on. Foxx knew that he could not avoid suspicion. He had always been easy to blame.

Andrea's eyes were opened and Foxx closed them, rising stiffly from the floor

where he had passed the night. The sky was streaked with pink clouds and the rising sun had set the birds to work, quarreling, and singing, and darting furtively about. A robin hopped in the dooryard pulling up a night crawler. Loons chortled in the distance and the new shoots of the birches scratched on the windows in the wind.

The body was stiff. Foxx had arranged her quietly on her back, arms tight to her side and had closed her legs. He shook harder as he recalled his impulses to assault the corpse. He cursed her, "Damn bitch! What the hell was you doin' out in that storm? Wasn't my fault, but who'd believe that? Now I got's to get rid of you 'fore the old man comes lookin'. Wonder why he ain't been lookin for you already?"

The notion plagued Foxx. He could not imagine what she had been doing. He wondered if Strang was ill, or dead himself. Had she been going for help? Perhaps she was staying up alone. Had there been two people in either of the cars he had seen leaving the day before?

Foxx was wearied by the thinking. He resolved to hide the body and see if he was suspected. Perhaps he could sidle over to Mary's Point and see if anyone was there. If not, he could slip the body into the lake and no one would be the wiser. They all skinny-dipped there, but the storm would have made that unlikely. He tried to think like a warden, but he could not. His brain and his heart burned. His skin itched and he seemed to be breaking out in scarlet blotches.

Moving her, he determined, was riskier than hiding her nearby. She must be hidden where animals would not find her, and where the odor of decomposing flesh would not be noticed. Foxx resolved to dump her, at least for the time being, in his outhouse pit.

Andrea seemed heavier to him than she had in the night. Foxx was riven with fear and opted to push the stiff corpse out the back window of the cabin where it would fall in the bushes. The task sapped much of his diminished strength. He pushed out the window and fell on top of the dead woman. The bushes were soaked and he rose awkwardly to his feet. He dragged Andrea through the scrubby growth behind the cabin until he was almost in sight of the outhouse. Foxx's clothes and boots were muddy and wet. His breath was labored and he looked up angrily at the sunrise.

Foxx peered tentatively and cautiously around the corner of the cabin. He reckoned by the sun that it was five-thirty. He knew that he was most vulnerable to observance at this point. He looked, with a squint, toward his goal. It was only twenty yards to the outhouse, but knew that he could not drag the body without leaving tracks in the wet, muddy, ground. He would have to carry her.

Leaning against the rear of the cabin, his breath coming hard with fear, and his heart pounding, Foxx was seized with a notion to simply flee. He reasoned against it when he looked out at his truck. He could explain away the dent. He could think of several explanations, all doing with the storm. He could not explain the corpse.

Summoning up strength, Foxx went to his shed and got a prybar and a hammer. He went into the out house and pried up the seat. The three hole bench was five feet wide and the pit was deep. He poured a bag of lime on top of the waste and paper then went back for the body.

Andrea was semi-rigid and stared oddly at Foxx as he propped her up against the edge of the building. He was afraid she might speak. Across the twenty yard gap

he could see the propped open door of the outhouse. The body had become too much for the weary man to lift over his shoulders. Instead Foxx put his arms around her, his hand locked beneath the stiff muscles of her buttocks, her head on his right shoulder, as if they were dancing, and began to run with short stiff steps toward the outhouse. At the door he tried to go straight in, but the corpse's head banged on the header. Foxx nearly buckled, and he staggered back as if struck by a blow. On the second try he pushed through the door and nearly tumbled into the pit with the body. The corpse landed with a wet sucking noise, and the fresh lime wafted up from the pit like smoke.

Looking into the pit, as the lime cleared, Foxx was horrified to see that the corpse had landed face up. The wind slammed the door behind him and Foxx wet himself with fear. He cursed more audibly than he would have wished. Imperturbed by the noise of steel on steel he quickly hammered the bench seat back into place. He was exhausted, but enlivened, by the fear of detection. He had committed no crime. His crime was to be poor and unnoticed. He would have been blamed for the death, he was sure of it, no matter how rational a story he had told.

In the cabin Foxx took some old shingles and some pine cones and stirred the fire to life. He stripped off his vile clothing and when the fire was roaring full, and after he had bathed in the numbing water from his well, he burned them. He cleaned his boots and dressed in fresh clothes. He suddenly realized he had not eaten in almost two full days and heated a can of beans on the stove and opened a can of pineapple chunks which he ate from the can with his fingers. Foxx tried to warm

himself by sitting close to the fire and by wrapping his hands tightly around a hot mug of instant coffee.

Foxx sat quietly by the fire for an hour. He was proud of himself. He felt he had not panicked, and he began to feel invincible in the way a man who has just survived an accident, or event which should have killed him, is reborn into confidence. He felt the cockiness rise in him.

The fat woman plagued him. Had he killed her? He could not imagine her calling the police. If she died would they examine her and wonder if it was murder? He imagined she was still alive.

CHAPTER XXVII

Strang had scrupulously avoided hangovers. People who drank to excess were weak, and those not prudent enough to drink plenty of water and take a few aspirin before bed, were simply fools in his mind, and deserved a hangover. His head ached and his throat was parched. He had gas and no energy. The blame was with others, and Strang laughed aloud as he thought of his son's grandstanding and petulance. That is the problem with his generation, he thought, the young simply want things. Strang believed that his son would come back, hat in hand, and seek a rapprochement. The hangover was Andrea's doing. She was too hysterical, too weepy, too quick to avoid confrontation. She was a coward. With some happiness Strang imagined his wife's discomfort in spending the violent night in the cold cabin.

He rose, went to the kitchen and drank two large glasses of cold water in a few quick greedy gulps. He put the kettle on and looked out the window to see his boat securely at its mooring. "Take the boat to Nargate and buy a car," he uttered aloud. "That'll be the damn day hell freezes over."

Strang looked approvingly across the lake. The strong clearing breezes had ushered in a cool morning. Katahdin's summits lay wreathed in snow, and all the high peaks glistened in the early sun. Whitecaps were beginning to form on the lake and the spray sang sibilantly on the rocks in front of the big house. Strang ate heartily. He believed that a good full breakfast was the best cure for a night of over-indulgence. The clear cool wind buoyed his spirits, and he laughed to himself with the confidence of a victor.

Strang took stock of his triumph. He had slept in his own bed and slept soundly. Will and Gretchen had spent the night in some motel, and Andrea had been relegated to a musty cabin.

When the dishes were done Strang decided to awaken Andrea. He was irritated, almost vexed, to find the cabin empty. The bed was unmade and he wondered if she had taken the car and left him. Angrily, he crossed the causeway and checked the parking field. He was relieved to see the car. He went back to the cabin and carefully observed the bags and suitcases. Andrea's purse and wallet were still in the cabin.

It annoyed Strang not to know where his wife was. The store had not yet opened and he surmised that she had gone for a walk. It pleased him to think that she might have not slept well, and had gone for a walk because she was unable to rest. It would serve her right after she threatened to leave him. Strang insisted to himself that his wife was like a child, and that a little discipline every now and then was a good thing. She'd learn from this episode that she was not able to function without his assistance.

Though he itched to go fishing Strang wanted to be in the house when Andrea returned. He sat on the porch reading, though his headache would not go away completely, and he had some trouble concentrating. He went out to the workshop and again checked the cabin.

Foxx sat in a chair in his dooryard and cleaned his rifle. The sun felt good on his face. His emotions rolled from abject terror and fear, to complacency and smugness. It nettled him that Andrea had landed face up. There was something

accusatory in it that he could not understand. It was like the fat woman hitting him. She had started that fight and Andrea's death was her own fault. If both women were dead then that was just how it had to be. It was no different than his own mother's death. Women died in strange ways.

When his rifle was cleaned Foxx went to his shed and found an old bicycle pump. He knew he would have to go to town for a new tire, and the spare was quite low on air. Laboriously he managed to inflate the bald tire a bit, but the chore was too taxing for his weary muscles. Foxx felt suddenly drugged and purposeless.

Strang grew more and more annoyed by his wife's absence. He could not imagine where she was. He walked back to the field and looked for footprints in the sandy and muddy places, but saw only his own and those of a small deer. Farther out into the road there were the notched paw prints of a fox splayed in the mud. He thought they belonged to a small dog. No human print was evident. Strang looked at his watch and knew by the hour that the store still had not opened.

Foxx examined his truck and scrutinized the dent. It was an ordinary dent like any dent in any truck in the woods. It could have been made by the glancing blow of a falling limb, or a brush at low speed with a deer or moose. It might be easily explained. Flushed with new energy Foxx began to organize and clean the truck. He went into the camp and opened all the doors and windows. The curtains flapped in the breeze and the edges frayed. Foxx resolved to take a trip once he was sure no one suspected him of any crime. He thought of moving away completely. He might go to Australia or Oregon. He delighted in planning for a new and better life. In a new

place he could be respected. He now understood women. He would no longer be so solitary. He could live in a town and have a job and perhaps even marry.

When the truck was ordered and the cabin aired out Foxx decided to sight in his rifle. He had two boxes of new shells and one of reloads. A dead larch stood a hundred feet from his dooryard and Foxx nailed a large cedar shingle to the tree. The gun felt cool in his hands, and the newly oiled stock gleamed in the sun. The rich smell of the gun oil and stock oil, was like perfume to his nose. He had deftly cleaned the lenses of his scope, and rubbed the blue-black barrel to a glinting shine. For a moment he wondered if he should risk firing his gun, but the feel of the polished stock in his hands gave him a renewed confidence in himself and his judgment.

Strang heard the gunfire from Foxx's camp and decided that Andrea might have walked through the woods to visit her old playmate. "Just the kind of sorry-assed bastard she'd go see," he said smugly aloud. "She likely went to see that weird bastard just to annoy me." With a resolute anger Strang strode toward Foxx's shabby cabin. The gunfire had spooked a riot of crows from the top of a dead larch, and they flapped noisily over Strang's head. "Noisy black bastards," he called to them, "Flying niggers are all you are."

Foxx was startled by Strang's approach and wheeled around, his rifle at his hip. Strang threw up his hands and laughingly said, "Sly, I didn't mean to scare you...I was just looking for Andrea and I thought she might have come over here."

Foxx's throat was sere and shriveled. He honed his gaze on Strang's face. "What makes you think she'd come here", he said, his voice cold and vaguely menacing, "She ain't never come here before."

“Easy, Sly. Put the damn rifle down-Jesus... relax will you?”

“I ain’t used to bein’ snuck up on and I don’t get visitors. I ain’t seen her.”

“Fine, but you seem awfully upset by a mere visit. She put you up to something? I know you were friends when you were kids. She’d trust someone like you.”

“I told you, I ain’t seen her. What do you mean someone like me?” Foxx felt his hand involuntarily tighten on the stock and his finger curl closer to the trigger. Once he would have taken the insult with subservient cheer, but in his fear and confusion his anger flared. “I ain’t never done you no harm or disrespect Mr. Strang. I keep to myself and I do what I say I’ll do.”

“Sly, I think you are hiding something. If Andrea is here, I’ll make it worth your while to tell me.”

Foxx felt lightheaded. Strang stood immutable in the sunlight. Foxx squinted to discern the inscrutable look on Strang’s face. He was sure Strang knew that he could tell him where Andrea was. Foxx felt cornered and over-matched. “Suppose I do know where she is--what’s it worth to you?”

Strang smiled gratuitously and in a clipped insulting way said, “Leo, I have five hundred dollars in my wallet. You tell me where she is and I’ll give you some.”

“Yeah? How much?”

“Well you tell me where Andrea is and I’ll decide.”

Foxx burned from the insult. The fat woman’s face flashed before him. he remembered that her panties had been blue, the same color as Andrea’s. His mind

cleared and he felt the ponderous fear leave him. With the point of the gun he motioned toward the outhouse. "She's in there."

"Looking for a warm place to set her butt down?"

"Guess so. She didn't say."

"Didn't she?" Strang chuckled to himself and walked toward the outhouse. He knocked on the door and then called out, "Gig's up. Sly tells me you're in there. Open up for God's sake." When no one answered he went in. Finding the room empty and dark Strang turned to face Foxx, and shading his eyes saw the point of the gun swing at him. A single shot tore through his chest and he slumped against the back wall.

Foxx once again pried off the bench. He emptied Strang's wallet. It had only seventy-five dollars in it. "Lying cheat," Foxx howled aloud. He rolled George into the pit where he landed face down atop his wife. The wind slammed the door behind him and he jumped, hitting his head on a rafter. The bullet had passed through Strang and lodged in a thick chestnut post that bisected the rear wall out the outhouse. Foxx dug furiously with his pocket knife, but the ironlike wood refused to yield the slug. He cursed aloud and noticed, as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, that the wall was splattered with blood as were his clothes.

Foxx's thoughts turned to flight and to Australia. He leaned against his truck exhausted. He contemplated pulling the bodies out of the pit, putting them in the cabin and torching the camp, but he remembered that would not work. He thought of taking them to Mary's Point and burning them in the main house.

With a burst of energy he packed his belongings, his camping gear, his gun and ammunition, all of his clothes, and all the canned goods in the house, into the bed of the truck. He pulled a tarp over the bed and tied it down. He knew he must run.

As Foxx poured a can of kerosene onto the pile of shingles and rags in the bedroom of the cabin he looked around the room. He was amazed by how little he owned. He opened all the closet doors and left the windows wide open. He stepped back and looked at the pile of debris which would ignite his home and felt briefly as if he might cry. From the shed he fetched a length of cotton rope which he drenched in gasoline. He tried to construct a slow burning fuse, but fear had robbed him of his dexterity. He thought about the fat woman and wished he had taken her cigarettes.

Foxx was finally resolved to fate. He took the rope and added it to the pile in the bedroom. He washed at the sink, but could not get the smell of the gasoline from his hands. His fear fatigued him. He contemplated stealing Strang's car. He reasoned that the keys were probably at the bottom of his outhouse. He thought about looking through Mary's Point for more money, or other valuables, but thought it best to simply flee.

Foxx struck a large wooden match and it burst into flame casting shadows on the dark walls of the bedroom. He tossed it on the pile and the fire sparked to life. For a brief moment Foxx thought about extinguishing the blaze, but suddenly turned and ran to his truck. He did not look back as he drove off. A chill ran through him as he passed the entry to Mary's Point. The truck slid a bit on the bad tire.

The sun was bright and the snow peaked mountains cast shadows on the lake.

The whitecaps splashed over themselves in the spanking breeze, and the truck bounced through deep muddy puddles, sending bits of mud over the hood and onto the windshield. At each pothole Foxx prayed for the tire to hold.

Foxx checked his rearview mirror and craned his neck awkwardly to look for smoke, but saw none. He slowed for a deep puddle and looked over toward the old doctor's camp. Summer crouched in her garden. Foxx noted the absence of her husband's truck. He stopped. He took his rifle from the rack behind his head and walked over to the garden gate. Summer was annoyed by his boldness. Shading her eyes she looked up at him. "Looking for wolves Mr Foxx?" she asked.

"Nope. I am looking for you," he said coldly. "Be smart and don't make me shoot you like I had to shoot him. Get in the truck."

"Is this some kind of joke?" she replied uneasily, but without real fear.

"I don't wanna kill you. I won't hurt you, but I might need a hostage for a bit. I'll let you go soon as I can. Now get up, put on those shoes by the fence there, and come with me."

Terror seized her and she could not speak. "I don't wanna have to hurt you like the fat bitch, now do as I ask and you'll be alright." His voice rose with menace.

Mutely, she obeyed, and walked slowly toward the truck as if unable to do but what she was asked to do. Foxx opened the passenger door and then crawled over her to the driver's seat. With the rifle across his lap he began to drive away.

"There's some electrical ties in the glove box. Get them out."

Summer opened the box and fished out a snarled mess of black plastic ties. She put them in her lap.

"Fasten your seat belt," he said softly, almost kindly, "I got a bad tire and the road is real slick."

When they had cleared the store, at the outer edge of the campground, Foxx stopped and pulled over. Without a word he bound the trembling woman's wrists." I won't hurt you 'cause you been nice to me. You talked to me and you didn't look down on me."

"Where are we going?" she asked eagerly.

"I'm going far away. You are going as far as I need to take you."

"Look, Dorian will come looking for me. He'll call the wardens--he's suspicious by nature."

Foxx exploded and pounded on the dashboard, the rifle nearly falling from his lap. "Look, damn it, I had to kill him. I killed her by accident, but no one'd believe me. You shut up and we'll be fine. You're still a friend. So shut up now."

"I'm scared."

"Don't be."

The truck bumped back onto the main road. Summer sat as far back in the seat as she could. She feared the rifle would discharge when the truck hit a bump. She tried to read her fate in Foxx's eyes. He drove as if she weren't there. She wondered if he did think of her as a friend and several times thought to speak to him, but found herself unable to make a sound. The sun hurt her eyes and she had little leg room as Foxx had packed a sleeping bag and a small box of pictures on the floor.

Summer tried to stretch her legs and knocked over the sleeping bag. The old pornographic magazines lay about her feet. A cold terror seized her. She looked closely at Foxx who drove in silence and chewed on the inside of his cheek.

She had expected him to follow the road toward Nargate, but instead he drove over the dam and out to the Golden Road. Summer assumed he was driving toward Millinocket, but at the junction he turned west toward Canada. She knew the road was gated there and that there was no border station. Her fear grew palpable and it unnerved Foxx.

“Relax. You ain’t gonna be hurt. I’m goin’ over the west of Pittston Farms on a tote road I know. If the road ain’t washed out I can get around the checkpoint. Almost no one knows the way ‘cause the paper company--friggin bastards--gated it. I got a key for the gate. Stole it a few years ago. Up ‘til last fall anyway it was the same key. If not I’ll shoot it off.”

This knowledge frightened Summer. If Foxx got around the checkpoint, he might travel for a long time before he was intercepted.

“What do you care about the checkpoint. I won’t say anything.”

Foxx exploded. “Don’t play me for dumb like Strang did. I may be common. But I ain’t stupid. You smart folks think I’m stupid and I’ll fall for lies.” Then accenting each word with a slammed fist on the dash he screamed, “I ain’t stupid!”

Summer sat frozen with fear. The electrical ties had not been tightened fully, but they chafed her wrists. She wanted to cry. The truck swung quickly and Summer was slammed against the door violently. Foxx hissed viciously through his teeth and yelled in exasperation. “Fucking tire blew, Goddamalmightyshit!” The truck fishailed

on the muddy road and Summer screamed as she saw a large tree before her eyes. She closed her eyes and braced for the collision, but the truck swung wildly again, and Foxx regained control. He rained curses on the tire and his lack of a spare. He cursed himself for not taking Strang's car.

Summer began to cry. Foxx said nothing to her but kept driving slowly and with great difficulty. Finally after several minutes he pulled off the Golden Road into a barely noticeable tote road. Branches of small bushes, still wet with rain, abraded the sides of the truck. Foxx drove recklessly over a small sapling that lay across the road. A few miles later he stopped and pulled over next to a stream, swollen with the rain. For a long moment he did not speak. Then he turned to Summer and said softly. "We gotta see what we can carry because we ain't drivin' any further." Then he reached over and with his pocket knife cut the electrical ties. "Get out and go 'round back of the truck"

Foxx lay the rifle on the hood of the truck and the freshly oiled barrel gleamed in the sun. He tore off the tarp and took stock of his supplies. The wind rustled the wet branches and the brook sang a garbled song. "'Fore they clear cut upstream this was as pure a stream as in these parts. Full of trout and salmon too, it was, now it's ordinary. It's gonna be cold too and we gotta wade down it some. We're gonna walk in it goin' upstream--that way they'll think we gone to Canada, but I'll be goin' to Australia. See I got this card--I ain't never used it, but I can get the money from my account--I got lots in there. I kept it. You gotta show me how to use it. Then I let you go. We gotta go in at night. It will take all day and part of the night. We can slip up on the bank. I know a way."

Foxx fumbled with his pack and adjusted the sling on his rifle. He looked for a long moment at the sky and snorted.

“Now this stream is high, but we still got three foot of clearance under the bridge. I’ll decide what we carry and we’ll leave it on the down stream bank. We’ll leave prints goin’ in upstream, but we’ll go underneath and pick up the gear on the otherside. I’m sorry it has to be this way--it just does. Sit down and wait for me to decide what you carry.”

Foxx went to the bed of the truck and took out his pack and his fishing tackle. He went into the cab and got the sleeping bag and wrapped the fishing gear in it and tied the bag to the pack. He made a bindlestiff out of a blanket and a small length of copper pipe. He hastily threw some canned food in it and some extra clothes.

When he was satisfied that he had all they could carry he walked back to where Summer sat. “You carry the hobo sack, I’ll carry the rest.” He set the pack and bundle down by the stream side and began to undress, carefully placing his clothes in a pile . He tied them together in a knot. “You do the same,” he said with his back to her,” the water is cold and without dry clothes down stream you’ll die from hypothermia.”

Summer could not look up at Foxx and she could not move. “Do as I say. You’re coming with me, or you’re dying.” Summer rose slowly. She turned her back to Foxx and undressed. She tied her shorts and underwear up in her long-sleeved denim shirt and tossed the buddle to Foxx barely looking at him. He walked across the road and into the stream shuddering. She covered herself with her hands and followed. The numbing cold of the stream made her gasp and she quickly followed

Foxx under the dark bridge where the stream narrowed and quickened. On the other side he got up on a rock and grabbed the rifle and pack and his bundle of clothes. He headed downstream and Summer struggled up onto the rock as well. She took her clothes and the bundled and slid back into the waist deep water. She followed Foxx who did not look back. When she cried out that she could go no longer the stream began to quicken and turn left. Foxx threw the rifle and his clothes up on the bank. Next he grabbed an overhanging branch with one hand and heaved the pack up onto the bank. He beckoned to Summer who, numb to the point of terror, half-trudged, half floated to him. He took her load and tossed it up on the bank then grabbed her hand. She tried to recoil and shuddered violently when the stream washed her against him.

“You gotta climb out,” he said over the roar of the stream, “You have to get out I’ll boost you.”

Somewhere she got the strength to respond and lay exhausted in the bright sun on a mossy patch of ground. Foxx dressed quickly, his breath fast and hard, and he hopped from foot to foot to warm himself. He untied the bundle and threw the damp blanket over Summer who shivered violently and whose lips were blue. He rubbed her dry and she could not protest. When she could speak he handed her her clothes and looked away as she struggled back into them beneath the blanket.

The bright June sun could not warm her. Her bones felt brittle and frozen. She sat on the ground and wrapped the blanket around her. Foxx dug an old sweater from his pack and told her to wrap it around her legs. Slowly the numbness receded and the painful pin pricks of recirculation stabbed her toes and fingers.

The stream roared, hawks cried, and the woods dripped. Summer did not know how long they sat in silence. Suddenly Foxx said, in an imploring and quiet tone, "You're a writer right?"

"Yes., she replied still shivering.

"Well maybe you'll write ta book about old Sly Foxx someday and get real rich."

She did not reply. After a few minutes he said sharply, "Get up we got a long way to go--best way to warm up is to move. You know Summer we might even see the wolf if he's still up by Oven Rock."

CHAPTER XXVIII

Dorian sat in the shade of a large boulder and ate the thick sandwich he had packed for lunch. The fast moving stream babbled beneath his perch on a flat piece of shale faded and worn by the weather. He had fished all morning and as the noon sun poured down he was content to watch the small trout and salmon rise to the caddis hatch emerging before him.

As he ate, he wondered about Summer's curious ennui, her lack of motivation, her strangely sporadic writer's block and her dark, vivid dreams. His wife had always been a bit moody, but only recently had she seemed to have a dark side. He was glad to be alone. Lately it seemed he had been alone even with his wife. The easily understood rhythm of their life together had been interrupted by her occasional sullenness and despair. This was, however, and unbroachable subject, a taboo, that when mentioned unnerved Summer making her short-tempered, or glib.

Dorian had worked diligently to finish the garden fence and to plant the last seeds and plants, so they would have time to be together. She had not seemed to enjoy the intimacy. Rather than try to discuss her feelings, for fear of being rebuked or dismissed, he had decided to give her an entire day to herself. He had packed a lunch and gone in search of small streams with good early season fishing, rushing streams that would be but tame rivulets in the heart of the summer.

He had followed the tote road, that first looked like an abandoned path, deep into the country just south of the Golden Road and west of the lake. The road he had eased his truck into had been almost obscured by bushes, but the way the land sloped

away held promise, and Hinds had found that the road crossed and recrossed a nice stream. The bridges were fairly new and there were some areas of recent clearcutting interspersed with old mature forests. He had fished in several spots before resting awhile at a large pool surrounded by boulders and one huge flat rock.

There he had noticed no old tangles of monofilament or half ripped styrofoam bait cups. He imagined the pool would hold fish, and he had been rewarded with several nice trout. The water was fast and dark.

Dorian finished the sandwich and lay back, his head cradled in his interlaced fingers. The sun felt good on his face and he dozed off. When he awoke he stretched and looked at his watch. It was only one-o'clock and he decided to fish some more. He switched to a sinking tip to get deeper in the water, and to get the fly down below the smaller fish at the surface. Most every cast brought a strike, but very few were of any size.

After another hour he decided to head back towards camp and to stop at the big dam and see if the fishing looked any good there. In the early morning the current had been too fast, the river too swollen, and the banks dangerously slippery.

The truck moved slowly and nimbly over the hummocky road, and splashed noisily through the puddles. About a mile from the main road Dorian noticed a truck parked on the south side of the stream, and thought it looked like Foxx's, save for a large dent in the front right fender. A blue bandana caught in the branch of a scrubby birch tree reminded him of his beautiful moody wife.

When Dorian reached the big dam he parked on the road and peered over at the river, which ran wilder than it had in the morning, the thunderous roar of the

water as it raced out of the chutes, obscuring all other sounds. Dorian saw that the only accessible sites were occupied by fishermen, and he went back to the truck. Just as he started the motor he noticed a large vehicle, a Wardens Service firetruck, coming across the bridge at him. He swung his truck to the right and hugged the guardrail as the firetruck passed.

At Grayson's, Dorian bought a candy bar from a young girl he did not know.

"Where is everyone else he asked.?"

"Up to Foxx's place; it burnt down?"

"When?"

"Early, seven o'clock, mebbe."

"Was he in it?"

"I don't know. If he was he's dead 'cause it's all burnt down to the cellarhole. If he wasn't he's lost ev'rything."

Dorian hurried to his truck and drove to his camp. He called for Summer and when she did not answer drove up the road past Mary's Point and toward Foxx's camp.

He was stopped at the head of Foxx's road by a warden in aviator shades. He was standing with a state policeman and a Penobscot County Sheriff's Deputy. "The area is closed sir."

"I was just looking for my wife, I thought she might be here."

"We only have authorized personel here now sir."

"Is Foxx here?"

“We don’t know where he is. If he was inside... we don’t know yet. His vehicle is gone and no one has seen him--have you seen him in the last twenty four hours Mr....”

“Hinds, Dorian Hinds, my wife and I have the camp that used to be’..”

“You’re the gardener. You’ll need at least a six foot fence to keep the deer out.”

“Everyone tells me that. I haven’t seen Foxx, but I saw a truck like his with a big dent in the fender, when I was out fishing.”

“Where was that?”

“Well. You head west out the Golden Road, maybe eight miles or so, then near a big boulder and a fallen spruce there is a left turn. It’s almost obscured by some bushes there’s a tote road that falls away down into the valley, the road is good...”

The Warden turned to the State Trooper and said, “Jesus that’s the old way...Damn, you could avoid the checkpoint. It’s been barred for years, but Foxx used to work in there some years back. If he had even a bolt cutter he could get through because the paper company replaced all the bridges last year. They’re getting’ ready to start cutting there again soon. The road ought to be in pretty good shape--I saw some graders parked down there last week.”

“I’ll get on the radio and get it checked out”, the Trooper said, and he walked away toward a Jeep with State Police markings.

The Warden looked at Hinds. “You know Foxx well?”

“Barely know him at all. My wife doesn’t like him. She feels he’s a little too familiar and friendly, says he sneaks up on her when she’s outside, and acts as if they are old friends.”

“Do you know where your wife is right now?”

Fear beat in Dorian’s chest. “What’s going on?”

“Likely nothing, but the folks at Mary’s Point haven’t been seen all day, and their vehicle is there and their boat is moored. They left the place wide open. Looks like one of them, the man likely, may have walked over here this morning. There are no prints to indicate that he ever went home. Now we have a burned down building, a missing owner, a possible sighting of his truck in a place it would not ordinarily be, and that’s too many unanswered questions for me.”

“Is my wife in danger?”

“Couldn’t she be out for a walk?”

“She could be, but this Foxx guy scared her, maybe she had a gut instinct..Oh Jesus... Oh God... Back where I saw the truck there was a blue bandana hung up in a birch tree--Jesus my wife wears bandanas all the time when she works in the garden.”

The Warden called over to the Trooper. Hal you better come here we might have something.

CHAPTER XXIX

Summer was warmed by walking, though the way was overgrown and the new tendrils of the low bushes whipped her legs and the sun beat on her head. She cursed losing her bandana. Foxx led the way. He knew she would not run for she was lost. Climbing up out of the narrow valley, Summer noticed the stream fading from their sight and sound. The forest was dark and cool and dreeping, the clearings were bright and alive with emerging bugs and small birds that flitted away from the human intruders.

After they had walked for several hours they came to an open spot on a ridge. Far below lay the lake blown up rough and choppy by the persistent northwesterly winds. The wind and the flames had made quick work of Foxx's home. He had said almost nothing on the climb, except for occasionally urging her to walk faster. Summer tried not to look at Foxx as she followed him, infuriated by the darkness of his face and neck and the repulsive vision of his white narrow flanks and shriveled member as he had lifted her up onto the stream bank. The memory of his touch made her shiver and soured her stomach. She believed she would live, but was unsure if she would be safe from violence.

Foxx stopped abruptly in the opening and drank from his canteen. He offered it to Summer and she wanted to decline, but the throbbing dryness in her throat overwhelmed her and she gulped three long draughts. "Easy," he barked, "That's gotta last awhile Summer."

She hated the sound of her name on his tongue and despised the way he savaged her name with his voice, dropping the er and replacing it with an ah. She handed the canteen back to Foxx making sure to avoid contacting his skin.

For another hour, deep into the heating afternoon, they trudged up ever steeper terrain. Foxx had to pause more frequently than Summer, and his weariness began to annoy him. His directions became more terse and cruel. He barked directions to her through a raspy pant, "Left here, watch the branch, don't lag behind, hurry up," the words gasped from him.

At the edge of a clearing high up on a stony ridge line Foxx dropped his pack and laid his rifle gently down on the ground. "We'll rest here awhile. Don't want to sit too long or you'll cramp up."

Summer sat on the ground dropping the bundle. Her shoulders ached from the where the slender pipe rubbed her bones and flesh. Foxx took a can of peaches from the bundle and opened it. He handed it to Summer and then opened a can of string beans for himself which he began to eat with relish. His hands dug into the can, and he gulped the beans down and then belched loudly. Summer drank the juice from the can then slowly sucked the pieces of peach, one by one from the can, and chewed them quietly. The syrup and sweet fruit were a cool balm for her burning throat.

Summer was amazed at the naivete of Foxx. How did he expect to sneak into town and withdraw his money? She feared he did not even know that he would need a pin number, and that he might not even know how much money he could withdraw. Summer doubted that he would take a set back lightly. She feared an explosion from

him if his juvenile plans were foiled. The sting of violence seemed coiled in his scrawny sinewy frame.

She saw the immense weariness in Foxx's face. He struggled to keep his eyes opened as he slumped against a tree. He dozed and started back to consciousness several times, always looking to see if Summer had moved. She had resolved to go with him to town--sure that her best chances of rescue lay there. He had spoken of killing people and she wondered whom he had killed, or if he really had killed someone. She recalled the gunfire she had heard in the morning.

As Foxx snored, Summer debated trying to assure him of her friendship, perhaps gain his confidence so she could steer him toward a misstep. She knew how palpable his hatred of those he suspected of superior feelings was, and she dared not risk incurring his wrath by suggesting she had a better designed plan than he did. None-the-less she thought long and hard on ways to foul his nets.

Foxx began to smell of sweat and oil. He often removed his stained hat and scratched vigorously at his scalp. Summer noticed that he had clotted blood and scabs behind his ears, and had picked open insect bites on his forearms and neck. He pulled nervously at the crotch of his work pants, tucking and retucking his thin, worn, red flannel shirt.

CHAPTER XXX

Hal McCarron had been a State Trooper for fifteen years and he had known Foxx for ten. He always felt Foxx was an accident waiting to happen, but did not tell this to Dorian as they drove around Seemonus, and then back to the stream, where they found Foxx's abandoned truck. After a brief search they found the bandana, snagged farther downstream in a tangle of young poplars. The bright blue cloth smelled of Summer's shampoo, and the scent panicked Dorian.

McCarron ran the plate though he knew the truck was Foxx's. He had a bad taste in his stomach, an acidic sweet and sour mix of jelly doughnut and stale black coffee, but tried not to alarm Hinds, who was edgy and growing more agitated by the minute. Moments after they found the bandana another trooper and a warden pulled up in large pickup.

The new trooper was younger with a brush cut, aviator glasses, and a smugness that annoyed Hinds. "Howdy Hal," he said emotionlessly, "We've got some bad news. Deputy Harrington went to use the outhouse at Foxx's place and found blood everywhere, and a 300 Savage slug in the wall. He looked down in the pit and saw a body. They pried the seat up and found the Strang's--the ones that own Mary's Point, both of 'em in the pit. She had a broken neck and he'd been shot. He was fully clothed, but she was naked. No sign of assault except the broken neck. The coroner is on his way out there. This Foxx's truck?"

"Yes, Donaldson it is. This is Mr. Hinds, he saw the truck here this morning."

“Actually I saw it here this afternoon on my way back from fishing farther upstream. I fished off this bridge, but the current was too fast so I went upstream to a big flat rock-when I came back, maybe two-thirty it was here. It wasn’t here when I drove by here this morning at six or so.”

The deputy was scanning the area for prints. “Hal they went in the water here. I’ll go up the bank and see where they came out.”

“ Cal, if I was a betting man I’d guess old Foxx went in the water, came under the bridge and headed downstream. You look up there and Warden Donalson will look downstream. Mr. Hinds and I will drive up the road and see if they did get out above. Couldn’t stay in this water long.”

The jeep followed the tortuous snaky bends in the stream. Dorian peppered McCarron with questions. The trooper knew Hinds was too bright to be deceived. At the spot where Hinds had parked earlier the trooper gave him his assessment. “My guess Mr. Hinds is that Foxx got in some kind of an argument with the Strang’s and he killed them. The first death might have been an accident and Foxx being not too bright and panicky anyway, killed the other person to cover his tracks. Just a gut feeling there. Then he took what he could and torched the place. He likely grabbed your wife as hostage and was trying to get into Nargate, and a main road, without going through the checkpoint. He blew a tire, had no spare, and he’s making a run for Nargate through the woods. We’ll get him. I have to ask this. Is your wife likely to stay calm?”

“Hell, I don’t know. Who the hell could stay calm if they were kidnapped?”

“In general is she high strung or even-keeled?”

“Even keeled I guess, she’s moody, but she’s even keeled I guess. Why?”

“The cooler she is the better off she’ll be. Foxx is a weird one, but I suspect if your wife is calm she’ll be alright.”

McCarron swung his vehicle back around toward the bridge. Dorian was not soothed by the Trooper’s words.

At Foxx’s truck, Hal and Dorian met Donaldson and the deputy. The young trooper confirmed the older trooper’s suspicion. “He went down stream, we found the place they put their clothes back on,” he said noticing Dorian blench, “or at least put their shoes back on.”

Hal looked up into the high sun of the afternoon, “He’ll head over by Oven Rock and down across the mouth of Blood Creek Gore, try to sneak into town and maybe try to boost a vehicle. We’ll be waiting. Foxx isn’t bright, but he is clever and he knows his way around here. Mr. Hinds, you ride back with Donaldson, get somethings--clothes for your wife and the like, and come into town. Go to the warden’s office--less likely to be noticed. Let’s keep this as quiet as we can. Okay guys? I’ll radio headquarters. Warden Donaldson get a search party together and let’s see if we can’t be waiting for Mr Foxx. I’ll get a contingent of available troopers and deputies, and I’ll see if we can’t get some discreet help from a few of the local pilots. In the meantime keep quiet on the radio and back at headquarters, let’s not get the amateurs looking for Foxx. That might be a bad thing.” he paused and added. I suppose forensics is on the way to Foxx’s outhouse?”

“Yep. Should we call out the four wheelers as well?”

“Too damn loud. I don’t want to corner Foxx in the woods. Let him come to us.”

CHAPTER XXXI

The Grayson's store had become crowded with people as soon as the news of the Strang's murders, and Summer's apparent kidnapping, roared through the village and campground, as swiftly as the fire had consumed Foxx's cabin. Nearly every man carried a rifle, and nearly every woman wore an expression of sullen apprehension. The scanner crackled with two way conversation between timber haulers, truckers, air services and wardens.

Once the flying services had the news, pilots on fire duty, who knew the woods were too wet to burn, began to sweep low over the ridge tops, eyes peeled on the nascent, spreading forest canopy neglecting their proscribed routes.

The drone of Elmer Wheelwright's twin engined Cessna awakened Foxx from a fitful dozing. He seized his rifle and stared almost inscrutably for panicked moment at Summer. "Fuck!" yelled Foxx, and he grabbed Summer's wrist pulling her down behind a deadfall. "They found the truck already, and they must know about the one's I killed. You're a real hostage now Summer. I won't hurt you, but it may be some bad things will happen."

Summer did not answer. She was not deathly afraid. Weariness, sore muscles, and burning thirst, scorched her body. Her brain ached, but she felt strangely calm--almost detached, as if she could see herself and Foxx from the sky above them.

"I gotta think," Foxx said in a desperate tone, his voice cracking like a prepubescent boy. "I think we gotta head down into the gore and run for the border."

"Which border ? " Summer replied, confused and frightened.

“Canada. We gotta t’ try to get down the gore then up the backside of the ridge. Then we can follow the west branch of the Ompasscus stream up to the Golden Road near St. Zacharie. We can slip over there and they won’t figure we’ll try that.” Foxx said in a matter of fact way.

“Mr. Foxx, I can’t possibly go much farther....”

“You’ll go, and it’ll take two, maybe three, days. I been nice so far Summer, but don’t push me,” he said, his anger undisguised. “You’ll go.”

“You’d make better time without me,” she replied with little hope of persuasion.

Foxx did not reply, but simply pointed the way with the barrel of the gun.

They started back down hill, the way often steep and thick with scrubby brush. The hillsides oozed and bubbled. Summer slipped several times, and hurt her wrist regaining her balance. Foxx moved relentlessly though his shirt was soaked with sweat and flies swarmed around his head. He paused briefly and infrequently to look up at the position of the sun, and to scan the horizon whenever there was a view. Several float planes meandered overhead, but mostly flew over the lake. Foxx would stop quickly to point out a direction, or an animal, never speaking, but simply pointing. Summer thought it almost amusing that Foxx acted more like a father showing his child the deep woods, than a kidnapper and murderer. Foxx wondered momentarily if he had simply over-reacted. Maybe the plane had simply been a tourist. There were more float planes all the time on the lake.

Summer lost track of time, and did not know how long they had been descending the mountainside when they reached a small, but well worn, path that

crossed in front of them. "This is the way down from Oven Rock. We'll head back toward Seemonus, then we'll come to a stream by the gore. It is shallow, imagine so even now, and we'll wade down her. They'll figure we doubled back toward Seemonus. Go Right", he said dispassionately.

A few minutes before they met the stream they heard it. Summer was enveloped in a cold dread at the thought of entering more frigid water. She was surprised to find the sturdy snowmachine bridge and the trail markers crossing the rocky, debris filled torrent.

"Take off your shoes. Walk on the stones barefoot and the tracks will dry away. Them sneakers have treads with mud in 'em," Foxx said coldly and with a menace in his voice, "You can keep the rest of your clothes on this time."

He pulled off his boots and waited for Summer to take off her sneakers and tie them together. She put them around her neck, and wrapped them around the bindle pipe as well. Cautiously they began to make their way down stream, over the slippery rocks. The bindle was difficult to balance and Summer moved slowly and with an unfamiliar timidity. Foxx urged her sternly to go faster. A rock rolled beneath her foot and Summer spun down into a shallow pool, turning her ankle and losing some of the canned goods into the stream. The water around her grew opaque with sand and Foxx alarmed at losing precious supplies cursed aloud. Summer thrashed to a standing position her ankle slightly sprained.

Grabbing what she could Summer made her way to the bank and sat shivering on a shady stone, rubbing her ankle and quietly saying, "Shit, oh shit, I sprained it."

Foxx was vexed. He was also soaked from fishing about in the clouded waters for the lost cans. When he had found them all he wrapped them again in the bindle. He was angry with Summer and debated shooting her. He had been foolish to tell her his plan to escape. Her value as a hostage would be diminished if she could not walk. He wondered as she sat rubbing the ankle if she was indeed hurt, or was using the ankle as a way to convince him to leave her behind.

"A horse can't walk gets himself shot. Can't you walk on that?" he asked in short clipped syllables.

"Jesus give me a minute. If we can walk in the woods, not on the stones, I think I can, but I don't know for how long," she said timidly.

"If you want to see your husband again... you gonna have to walk as far as Canada," came the icy reply.

Foxx did not speak for several minutes while Summer tried to walk off the sprain. She tried to gain some time by suggesting that she would be best served by soaking the ankle in the stream until it numbed. "Five minutes... then we go," he said.

Summer sat at the stream's edge with her injured ankle submersed in the cold rush of the stream. While she sat she picked at a small green twig and pulled the moist pliant bark away from the stem. She made a tidy pile of it in the hollow of a cracked stone. Foxx paced nervously muttering to himself. After a few minutes Foxx swung his gun toward the sky, and told her it was time to go.

Summer put her shoes back on and tied them tightly believing that would hold down the swelling in her ankle. Limping, but not unable to walk, she followed Foxx down into the narrow valley.

Where the valley narrowed into a slit, approaching the end of the gore, they were forced out into the bright sun of early evening, and across an open field. Summer could see no way out of the gore, which resembled a canyon to her, as she stared down the last one hundred yards of the field. The stream was too overhung, and too rocky to walk down. To their left rose a steep hill that seemed to be the base of Oven Rock, which cast a great shadow over her. The rock loomed like a dark cloud above the gore, and was streaked with shadow and fading light.

On the right the stream fell away with the rushing sound of falls. Straight ahead lay a dark tangled cedar forest, that looked dank and impenetrable.

As they made there way through the soggy field the faint drone of a plane stirred the silence. Foxx grabbed Summer by the wrist, dropping his gun and began to drag her quickly toward the base of the hill. She followed as best she could, but fell and dragged them both down.

Lobo had been watching the humans cross the field. He lay crouched low against the flat sunny rock. His mate had smelled the humans and herded the pups into the hole in the hillside, near the gathering spot. She was especially guarded about the pups, perhaps moved by her own injury and its accompanied slowfootedness, and still herded them into shelter at the first hint of danger. The pups still obeyed.

Foxx raced along cursing, though the plane's motor did not seem to become louder. He felt a strange elation in each bounding step. Summer felt as if she was

being dragged. Ground and sky rushed before her eyes, and an involuntary scream burst from her throat. Foxx lost his grip on her, but she limped gamely forward. Foxx turned to face her and snarled at her to hurry, pointing to the large hole in the bank of the hill.

“We gotta crawl into that cave, now!” Foxx barked, his voice reedy and breaking.

Summer limped forward and then buckled. She tried to call out that she was coming. The plane drew nearer. Foxx rose up in the shadow of the small cave, scrabbled to his gun, stood erect, and began to draw a bead on Summer when the wolf lunged out of the shadows.

It was quick and furious and bloody. The wolf tore Foxx’s right arm away at the shoulder and then sunk his teeth into the man’s throat and tried tossing him into the air. For a brief second, Foxx seemed to float like a limp rag in the breeze. With his powerful jaws sunk deeply into the man’s thigh, Lobo tried to shake the body. Summer, paralyzed with terror, and sure of death herself, could not scream. The wolf tore at Foxx again and again, charging then backing away, limbs pinched in his jaws, until long after the man was limp and bereft of language. The snarl and growl of the great canine rent the silence of the gore, and drowned out the fading drone of the plane. The wolf ceased his violent attack and moaned softly. He nosed the twisted, mute, misshapen body, then dragged it several feet away toward the cave. The wolf circled the corpse slowly, his steely eyes always fixed on the bloody body.

Summer sat transfixed by the wolf’s power, and cowered, trying not to shake, as she feared his imminent attack. She bowed her head, at first unwilling to see the

wolf's face, or bloody ruff. Lobo panted, his saliva thick and crimson on his dark gums.

The wolf loosed a low howl, almost a moan, and his mate and the pups inched cautiously into the light of the fading day, from within the deep hole in the bank. The pups stood panting and blinking, their noses open to the moist scent of the fresh kill. Then, rising up to his full height, the immense carnivore stared fully into Summer's eyes, and she knew in his gaze, that he was the wolf of her dream, and a strange calm spread warm and moist over her, as if she had wet herself in the night.

Lobo moaned softly and took a step toward Summer as she knelt in the sun regarding him. He stared for a long time then turned toward his family. His mate whimpered to him and stood with the fur on her neck bristling, and her legs splayed and tense. The pups seemed frozen in obeisance. Lobo turned away, then looked back over his shoulder, and went up to his mate. He looked again at Summer.

Lobo nuzzled his mate and they began to trot away into the dark cedars, the pups following subdued and silent, and the mate limping ever so slightly.

Summer knelt for a long time in the soft, wet field, the sun dimming behind her and lengthening her shadow across the hummocky sedge and wildflowers. When she rose she was stiff; her ankle sore and throbbing. She found the bindle and used the pipe as a cane. She could not look at Foxx for a long time, and then when she did look down into his face, his eyes frozen in abject horror, she began to shake and weep. Each limb had been mostly torn from the torso, and hung loosely by tendon and sinew. The wolf had sunk his teeth deep into the man's throat and right cheek.

Turning from the carnage, and thinking she would walk out to the trail, Summer looked once into the darkness of the cedars and imagined that Lobo was peering out at her. A plane droned well off in the distance and Summer worried that she would have to spend the night in the woods. She considered taking the pack and the gun, but she did not want to touch Foxx's blood, and she would not have known how to shoot the rifle.

She walked toward the trail, the gore widening before her, and the light sinking in the west. At the bridge she did not know which way to go and realized that she had no way to signal her position without matches or gun. Climbing back up the hill and retracing her steps was impossible with her injury. Fear gave way to weariness and anger, and she sat shaking on the bridge and weeping.

The ankle was lightly purpled and swollen, not badly sprained, but still an impediment. Following the brook upstream would lead her to high ground, but she reasoned that it would not take her to a place where she could see the lake or gain her bearings.

Summer was suddenly afraid. In the cover of the woods by the trail the settling evening shivered in her like a chill. She saw two small deer step stealthily into the stream to drink, but they bounded away when, raising her hand to shade her view, the last slanting rays of the sun, reflected off her watch and spooked them. As they sprinted off Summer saw a great scar on the flank of the doe closest to her.

Again she heard the far off drone of a plane, and then the staccatto whirring of a helicopter. The chopper's roar drew closer, and Summer hobbled out into the field. She waved at the chopper as it swooped low over the gore.

The pilot put the helicopter down in the middle of the field. Summer stumbled toward the aircraft, and the whirling thatch and sand whipped her face and eyes. She crouched and hobbled, moving as quickly as she could, no longer aware of the stinging in her ankle. The pilot leaned down and helped her into her seat, and buckled her belt. As soon as she was secure he took off.

As the chopper rose over the gore the pilot asked Summer about Foxx.

“You are Mrs. Hinds, right?”

“Yes. I am Summer Roebuck-Hinds,” she replied, hyphenating her name for the first time.

“Where is he?”

“He’s dead. A wolf killed him. He’s down at the edge of the cedar trees at the end of the field.”

“A what?”

“It was a wolf. I’ve seen them in Minnesota. He has a mate and pups with him. Foxx was going to shoot me when the wolf attacked him. He tore him apart, and then the wolf just looked at me, and they went off.”

Over the drone of the rotors the radio crackled. The pilot answered a distant nasaly voice. “I have Mrs. Roebuck-Hinds. She has a sprained ankle, and otherwise looks ok. She says Foxx is dead--killed by a wolf, I’m going to fly over now and look.”

“Roger. Use caution and bring your passenger to the Warden’s HQ. Her husband is waiting.”

The chopper swooped low over the gore. In the twilight, on the short stubbly grass and moss, Foxx looked as composed as a broken child's toy, his limbs twisted and immutable. From the air the torn limbs appeared to be severed from the body. The blue-black barrel of the rifle and its polished stock gleamed beside the dead man.

"Warden's base this is Air One. I've never seen anything like this. There's a body there... torn apart like a ragdoll. I'll bring Mrs. Roebuck-Hinds in, and I think we'll have enough light to get in and land. Jesus this is a mess."

"Roger Kenny. What's your ETA?"

"Six minutes."

"We'll be waiting."

CHAPTER XXXII

Summer sat on an Adirondack chair in the sun, with her injured ankle propped on an old milk crate, and wrapped in an ace bandage. She wore a wide brimmed straw hat, a sleeveless shirt and baggy shorts. She observed Dorian in the garden at his work. In the two weeks following her kidnap and rescue, the police and wardens had been to her camp almost daily. She had told and retold all her memories a dozen times and the retelling had dulled the exactness of her recall. The palpable fear had ebbed quickly away, and she had no night terrors, nor any particular skittishness when alone. She was in fact annoyed that the lingering fears had gone so swiftly and without complication. As Dorian worked he talked to himself aloud. "Bush beans here, two rows of carrots here, so these seeds sprouting here must be...." He would mumble and then hum absent mindedly as a man who is content with his toil will do.

Foxx was dead. She was alive, and Lobo was alive as well. In the mornings, when the air was still cool, before the July sky swelled with sun and high clouds, she rose and wrote. Most mornings she finished at her typewriter by nine, and passed the morning in the sun, as Dorian toiled and tilled.

Her husband's affinity for the warm sandy soil intrigued her. He was not a man given to the ephemeral and evanescent things of life. Dorian loved permanence. Summer saw the garden as a utilitarian effort. If the sun and rain were in balance, and winter's frosty blade lay sheathed into early September, and the deer, woodchucks, rabbits, slugs, and bugs, did not ravage the plants, there would be, in due time, a

harvest. The anticipation of the crisp taste of that bounty sat seductively on Summer's tongue.

Dorian's purpose was precision and experiment. He weeded with a diligence. He plucked insects by hand from the fledgling cauliflower and broccoli plants, and set out saucers of beer to snag the slugs he suspected of lying beneath the warming soil, waiting to feast on the mature plants. The small insects he pinched from the leaves of emerging plants went into small plastic bags for identification.

As Summer sat basking in the glow of warm, bright, earth-scented weather, she had a companion, a small garter snake who slithered from under the camp, to lie tightly curled on a flat stone in the sun, near the front steps. Noiselessly, the snake lay for hours in the drowsy brightness on the sun-warmed stone, flicking its fangs, and occasionally lifting its head to the breeze off the lake.

Sometimes Summer would adjust her position in her chair to ease the numbness in her leg, or to put sunblock on her arms and calves, and the snake would briefly crawl down into the dark underworld beneath the cabin. He would quickly start away when she or Dorian would go into the house to get a cool drink or eat lunch. Gradually the snake became almost tame and did not always slither away when Summer approached.

When Will had called with Gretchen, Summer had searched the young man's eyes for his emotions, but she was profoundly confused. She could not find within his handsome boyish face the anger she had expected. The depravity of his parent's deaths did not seem to weigh overly burdensomely on him. He never inquired about

Foxx, or asked what Foxx might have told Summer about the murders. Summer noted that the couple always held hands.

As she sat in the sun a brief melancholy ran through her with a shiver. Summer missed the wolf in her dreams, and found herself aroused in memory. The dreams seemed more real to her than her ordeal. She longed for a dog. Summer knew if she asked for a dog, and told Dorian that a dog would give her a sense of security and protection, he would not disagree.

In Seemonus, Summer, was a most reluctant celebrity. Visitors were solicitous and curious, and far too numerous for the reticent woman's liking. She would sit with a book in the Adirondack chair, shaded by her wide brimmed hat, and read quietly, hoping no one would drop by. Her ankle had gone almost black in one spot and was streaked a soft purple in general. She could walk on it though it remained sore.

Summer preferred her husband and the snake for company as neither were overly demanding. She was polite to well wishers and neighbors, but she did not savour the attention she received. Her stomach sickened at the appearance of each warden or State Trooper. She marveled at the brass of the reporters who came from as far away as Portland to seek her story. She was grateful that she had no phone.

Dorian named the snake Lucy. When Summer asked him how he knew the snake was a female he named several reasons. He mentioned that the snake could rest on the stone for hours on end, and Summer felt a brief pang of hurt, inferring that Dorian was teasing her about her own immobility. She resented with a brief hot anger the inference that she was lazy. She realized in her husband's wide grin that he had meant to kindle a reaction in her. She flushed with annoyance, but said nothing. He

said that the snake's languour led him to think it was pregnant, and Summer looked carefully at the reptile to see if the belly was swollen. She decided she could not tell.

Once, when the day had grown hot, the wind had stilled, the birds had ceased their cacophonous chatter, and the clouds had begun to pile great thunderheads over the lake, Summer fell asleep in the chair. The sudden coolness of the breeze, and the darkening sky, did not awaken her. The stirring of dust devils in the road, and the swirl of leaves ripped from the birches, that danced and hissed in the wind, she did not see. The incipient, fat, cool, drops of rain fell on her slumberous arms, and wetted the brim of her hat. It was only when the sky was torn asunder and rent by great wails of thunder, and brilliant flashes of streak lightning, that Summer awoke. The sudden fury of the storm, the clouds ripped open and cleaved by the wind, brought a deluge, first spattering then slaying the dust. Summer darted into the house, noticing that Lucy had retreated to her underworld, where great black rivers of muddy rainwater swirled into oxbows and tentacles of tiny rivers.

Summer shut the windows against the fast gale, and lit the hissing gas lamps. The lake was a sea of foam in the distance, waves lashed the shore, and puddles grew instantly in the road. The plants of the garden bent and wilted beneath the wind's punishment. The storm rolled up the lake and over Seemonus for a furious fifteen minutes.

As Summer looked down the lake admiring the enormous power of the storm, she remembered that, at her insistence, Dorian had gone off to fish, and for a moment was filled with worry. She stared at the lake and the bending birches. The wind

swirled, and the trees bent left and then right across her vision, and looked to her like a group of lumbering, obese, women approaching the crest of a hill.

In a deafening final roar the storm passed over to the north and the deluge softened first to a patter and then to an irregular dripping in the trees. The furrows between the garden beds were several inches deep in water, and the puddles on the road were rippled in the drying breeze. The lake sloshed wearily in the aftermath of the wind's lashing. Blue-black clouds drifted off to the north trailing the dim rumble of thunder and the sky brightened. The sun cleft a swath in the lighter clouds and Summer stepped out onto the steps. The breeze was fresh, and the bright orb of sunlight rent open a hole in the clouds, sending a diffusing shaft of light onto the lake. Summer stared up into the sun, feeling the warmth on her face, and when shielding her eyes and looking into the portal, saw something she believed she understood.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Bruce Pratt was born in Bronxville, New York April 10, 1951, and grew up in Connecticut. He graduated from Vermont Academy in Saxtons River, (sic) Vermont in 1969 and Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1973, where he earned his degree in Religious Studies. After college he spent four years with the Simmons Company as a sales and marketing representative, but survived. Pratt spent most of the next twenty years as a singer/songwriter performing in many of the major acoustic music venues east of the Mississippi River and in eastern Canada. He won several awards and was the subject of feature articles in several major newspapers. During this time Pratt wrote occasional magazine articles and op-ed pieces, became president of his local volunteer fire department, served as a political party official and a municipal official.

Pratt toured and performed with many of the well known acoustic artists and served as artistic director of a prominent concert series, and a legendary folk festival.. Pratt has performed approximately one hundred times with Ramblin' Jack Elliott, and does so, occasionally, today.

Pratt has been married to his wife Janet for twenty-eight years, and they have two sons. Presently he is a part time teacher of English, Journalism, Drama, and U.S. History, at John Bapst Memorial High School, a small independent college preparatory school in Bangor, Maine, where he also is the head Skiing and Track and Field Coach.

Bruce Pratt is a candidate for the Master of Arts degree in English from The University of Maine in August, 2001.