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An Island Romance

Baron Wormser

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An Island Romance | *Baron Wormser*

Imagine everything being in place.
I don't mean only the pins in the drawers
Though I mean that too but I mean
Your feelings – not squashed or pruned –
But right in place and everything around
You in place, too. That's what
An island is, that kind of chance.

I know you can say that everything *is*
In place already, that trees can't dance
And birds shed feathers not leaves
And that's the rightness of place that counts –
And it is – but love gets mixed in here,
The love between men and women,
Husband and wife, that we say
We understand the way we understand
Anything that we do over and over
Till it becomes a kind of weather
But I'm talking about a man and woman
Living together more than forty years
On an island and no one else there.
I'm talking about a real man –
Black hair, medium height, a trace
Of a limp on his left side – and a real
Woman – blonde hair, high voice, small hands –
Who sometime in the late 40's – how about
'47? – came to Sheep Island which no
Longer had any sheep and which had gone
Back to spruce and built a house of cement
He rowed over bag by bag from the big island
And of those spruce he cut and fit into cement
Until it looked like a house in a fairy tale –
Each window casing made by hand,
Each pane set in the sash just so,
Each window placed for the fullest light.

He fished enough and she knitted sweaters
And they lived and people wondered but
They weren't bothering anyone. They had as
Much claim to live on a place that no one
Wanted to live on as anyone. When you saw
The two of them together in Cundy's store
As often as not they were holding hands.
They were neat looking – combed and clean –
But you felt a little uneasy because
You felt how deep love could go.
That it could pull you off into a world
Where you stopped caring about what
Others thought, that the merest touch
Of another hand could make your blood simmer
And softly growl with feeling that had to go off
By itself it was that strong

They never invited
Another soul out there ever. They got older
And they used the boat with the engine
Instead of rowing over but they still held
Hands and lived in that house we
Could picture because we had seen it
In children's story books. That's why
The blather about years and bags
Of cement is just blather – the sorry lint
Of facts, the *believe* in make-believe.
These two people had the sea for ears
And the sky for eyes and when they
Came together as man and woman
The pity of fathoms, the cold ocean notes
That sang outside their windows seemed to waver.

I know about age and death, as did they,
But think of the morning when they sat
By the cook stove they'd hauled out there,
When he came back from the out of doors and she
Put down her handiwork and they sat there
With each other, drinking their tea and
Their mouths making little in-drawing sounds
And their putting their cups down
And how the fullness of being alive
Was the rich heat of their imagining.