

the
Tower Light

*When a friend calls to me from the road
And slows his horse to a meaning walk,
I don't stand still and look around
On all the hills I haven't hoed,
And shout from where I am, What is it?
No, not as there is a time to talk.
I thrust my hoe in the mellow ground,
Blade-end up and five feet tall,
And plod: I go up to the stone wall
For a friendly visit.*

- Robert Frost, A Time to Talk

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Tower Light
SPRING 2011



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All words, men's muscle-motion, mass-movement
 Of fluid wholly shifting continents,
 The fast flit and chirp of a song-bird-flight,
 Fine, furred whisperings of the spring-sprung leaves
 Of joyfully life-laden thin-skinned limbs,
 Petal-lips, parted, just-kissed, feeling the sky
 Press beauty beating in the crush and peace
 Of the pure, priceless, pulmonary pulse—All ring-
 weaving rhymes in the living meter,
 In iambs and anapests of being and becoming,
 Spill full from the Muse Who Himself inspires,
 A shuttle shooting sure, His word, through naught,
 Space, stars circling 'round, ringing, fanning out,
 The woof and weave of the whole-earth verse.

O Winds, whip western thunders! Rise and spin
 The skies! They flee with loosened tresses! Winds!
 Caress their pretty dresses! All the girls!
 And lace their faces with their hair, in curls;
 Those petticoats! O fair!...No! I have sinned
 A million times, and cast, so paper-thin,
 My soul into the air, to whose torn face
 Was given all the love of all the world,
 But...there! Those tender lashes, sashes, eyes!
 Another figure caught in stormy grace!
 Another dress your breath has slightly furled!
 Another breathless moment! See! Her thighs!
 And Winds, when far below the world I lie
 There may I glimpse Francesca passing by.

How gold the stars appeared to be
At the window where I stood alone
And listened for the postal horn
From a distant, quiet land.
My heart burst from my body;
I secretly thought to myself:
Oh, who would travel there with me
In the splendid summer night!

Two young friends wandered
Over the side of the mountain.
I heard them as they sang,
Roaming the silent country:
From dizzying rocky crags,
Where the forest whispers gently,
To springs, which fall from the cliffs
Into the forested night.

They sang of marble statues,
Of gardens that grow wild
In the dawning autumn,
Of palaces in the moonlight,
Where maidens listen at the window
When sounds of a lute have waked them
And where drowsy fountains murmur
In the splendid summer night.

Es schienen so golden die Sterne,
Am Fenster ich einsam stand
Und hörte aus weiter Ferne
Ein Posthorn im stillen Land.
Das Herz mir im Leib entbrennte,
Da hab' ich mir heimlich gedacht:
Ach wer da mitreisen könnte
In der prächtigen Sommernacht!

Zwei junge Gesellen gingen
Vorüber am Bergeshang,
Ich hörte im Wandern sie singen
Die stille Gegend entlang:
Von schwindelnden Felsenschlүften,
Wo die Wälder rauschen so sacht,
Von Quellen, die von den Klүften
Sich stürzen in die Waldesnacht.

Sie sangen von Marmorbildern,
Von Gärten, die über'm Gestein
In dämmernden Lauben verwildern,
Palästen im Mondenschein,
Wo die Mädchen am Fenster lauschen,
Wann der Lauten Klang erwacht,
Und die Brunnen verschlafen rauschen
In der prächtigen Sommernacht.

The spider's webs
Between the leaves,

Are crystal nets
Among the trees.

The leaves are cups
That water bear

Which runs in beads
Down silver hair.

Small drops of sun
Lit golden bright,

A hammock laced
By spring-time sprite,

Here tremble at
Wind's merest mention

In tiny jewels
Of surface tension.

Even on dark days, half hung between sunlight and the new snow, the grass shows gold on the hill's raw scalp. The road stitches home in a red gash along the mountain's flank, bruised purple by distance and the mist which cuts and crouches low on the meadow.

It was about to snow, and the valley floor blushed up under the mountain's bated breath and bloomed toward those first flakes. The cold wind scuffed along the underside of my arm as I trailed it out the window where the breath-bated world rushed away behind the old pickup truck, refracting into emerald, crushed green of winter grass, soft lavender, and the long thrusts of gilded stalks against the mountainside.

I turned off into town, home for the last of many last times.

Main Street's Sunday morning lay all but dead drunk from the night before. It would stir soon, the hungover cowboys and the placidly unemployed ambling in for omelets; men in shit-splattered boots draining their coffee and clapping each other on the back before stomping back to the ranch. They would complain about the prices and get biscuits and gravy which are always three dollars and too cold. I waitressed in that cafe. I don't remember how many times I mopped the floors on empty afternoons, or how many glasses I broke or times I cried in the bathroom because I was sixteen and completely incompetent. I do remember Raven, who washed dishes for a while and wore fake eyelashes, and Clint Eastwood's faded signature on the bathroom door. No one believes me now, but he ate here every morning

during my shift while filming *Pink Cadillac*. He always smiled at me when he came in, and I once tipped eggs—sunny side up—into his lap when he asked me my name, I shook so badly. He tipped well, and then left.

I had been away from home a long time, running around the world hoping to come home by the back door and find it refreshed—or rather, find myself refreshed and able to see with new eyes, and not with the tired, too-honest squint of a lover who has seen all, suffered all. But “laundromat” was still misspelled three ways, and the heritage mural on the side of the bar, once a gold-miner’s bank, was still defaced.

The truck idled at the corner as I waited for a greasy little girl to cross where I had often crossed on my bike going to the library. On the other side, a steel cellar door settled in the sidewalk, sagging and chained shut. I’d ride over it quickly, always tempted to go around, half fearing I’d fall through. Sometimes I’d stop and stand there to feel the cellar-chill shifting up, smelling of beer bottles and old bank notes—blood money, perhaps, or the sudden wealth of a rich gold mine. More likely, though, it was just the honest, dispirited sweat of men promised gold but made to work the copper mines. Despair has its own smell, like dry knees and the tired summer sun on tin roofs.

The little girl crossed, and I turned off Main Street and wound down the little road coiling out of town toward ridge top.

The hills there recede like rows of pasteboard in a pop-up book as they sidle away. In winter they are frosted and filigreed like a fairy story. Summer heat is not so kind, and the sunshine soporific and stifling. The mountains mark the valley’s limit and where the town clusters, set down in watercolor and sepia: the old, gold-panning West gone to seed and meth.

I remember my first time out East, how, lying on my back, it seemed the world turned wrong-ways down, and I hung above the abyss of heaven like a child hanging from her knees in a playground, blood blinding in her ears. The clouds mounded up thick enough to fall into, like new mown grass, or fallen leaves, or snow drifts. Here at home, the sky braces itself between the mountains like a tent, tethered against the world’s weight and not quite full enough to billow free.

My road ended on the ridge-top on the other side of town. And there—there was the little house I helped roof. I had been so afraid of heights. Climbing up was not so bad, but I would sit away from where the plywood shot off into the sky and stay for ten minutes at a time before stepping off. The ladder would wobble with my haste, but it never did fall. The house even

then had settled well into the scarred shoulder of the hill healing around it, though scrap wood still sprawled out back, and the siding was still that strange salmon color. I was happy then to see the scrub oaks had survived my father's zealous pruning—though so had the manzanita which burns like gasoline.

I pulled in the driveway, the dogs muddying my lap almost before I had the door open. My father comes to the door, still pulling on his boots, and he calls them off, kissing my brow and slinging my suitcase over his shoulder. I know I have his blessing.

Title strings

Photographer Sally Nelson



	Title <i>Untitled</i>	Photographer <i>Shannon Odell</i>	
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Title

Monte Cavallo

Photographer

Tyler Weisman



Title *Industrial Honeycomb*

Photographer *Kindle Barber*



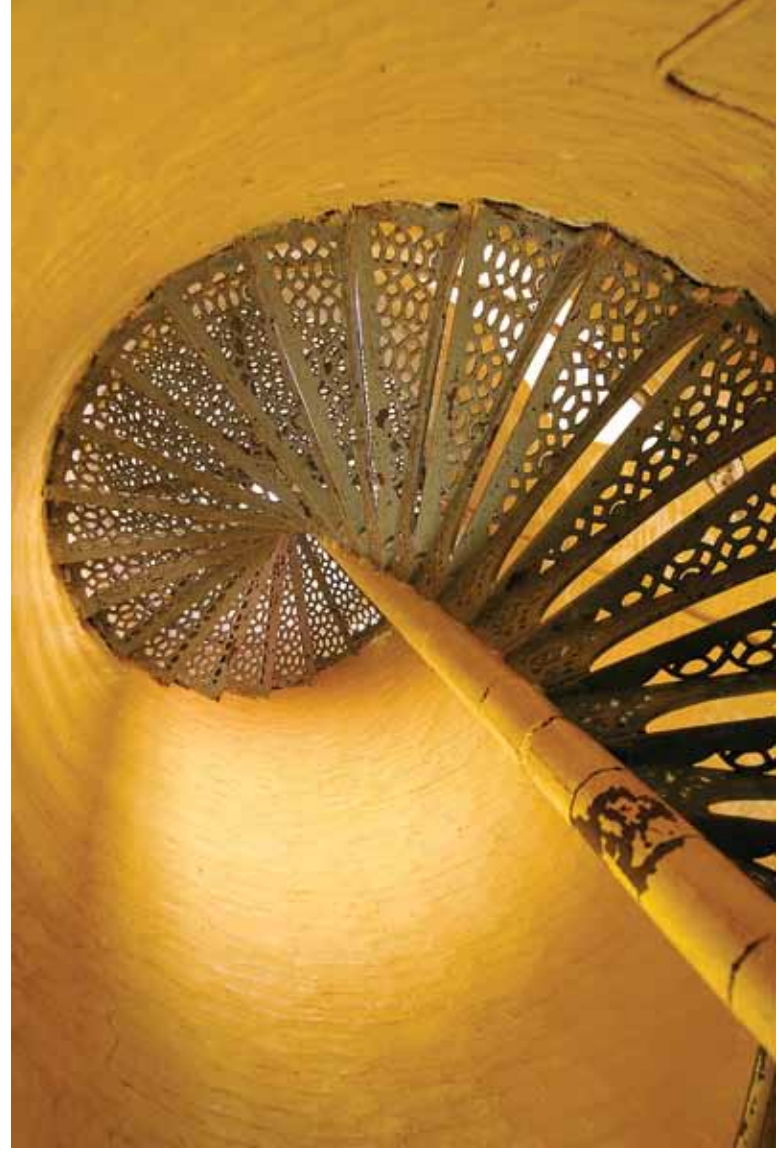
Title *Raws*

Photographer *Caroline Silmane*



Title *Stairs in the Iron Ore Lighthouse*

Photographer *Lauren Wierenga*



Title *Remembrance*

Photographer *Liz Esley*



I've always thought the tree's breath
Has more of life than we here see.
Outside, a weeping willow waits
And sighing softly says to me,
"I fear in death I'll cease to be a tree."

And sure enough it did not last
The autumn frost and winter's rage.
The sweet spring sighed outside my pane
The tattered tree was taut with age.
Then it passed to fire-wood and page.

I kept twelve tears the willow wept
And weaved a cage for birds to sing.
But often whispers wake me when
I dream of death and dreadful things.
I think I've kept my Dryad on the wing.

“Yes, they kill you, but so do television and bureaucrats.”
—from “Cigarettes” by B.H. Fairchild

The metal bus that stops and fills
with exhaust—from a low, dripping,
galvanized pipe—the small brown
shelter where I wait with businessmen
suited and hapless as Jews in the noxious rain,
tells me in horror-movie letters:

Smoking Kills.
Granted.

But cigarettes are the cure
in a society of coffee-table books
and tea brewing techniques,
of millionaires weeping to death
and TV commercials about lust and hair
which play while you step outside
where each visible breath taunts:
“death, where is your victory?”

The bare, black nail prepares with dark disdain
To pierce, to tear that Holiest of Hands,
Which—Maker-of-, made-of-dust—demands
It dig and delve, take root and tap the vein
Of red-rich, fertile earth. Remorseless, vain
Coarse, proud, the death-bound iron understands
Nothing, save with’ring, arid wrath. It stands
Aquiver for the wrist’s, the hammer’s strain.

Crushed, the rust-tipped root rent the silk-soft silt,
Spilt the living aquiferious well,
And sought to slow, to quell, the wine-dark swell
Of blood. But found’ring in that flood the wilt-
ed tendril sorrow, charity, and guilt
Discerns. As though by sudden storm, by spell
Transformed, it bursts in blossoms bright of bell-
Blooms closely twined with grace, and glory-gilt.

My sinful self the spike, the piercing power
Christ’s thankless love, which steps in streams profound
My dead-dry stalk, my confined, pallid flower
Transfigures, saturates with life. The wound
Receives my root, the Gardener King divine
Installs, involves me in the living Vine.

Late-rose Persian garlands, boy, are binding
chase not after them, when myrtle winding
forms crowns fit to grace one simply dining.

Persicos odi, puer, apparatus,
displicent nexae philyra coronae,
mitte sectari, rosa quo locorum
sera moretur.

Simplici myrto nihil adlabores
sedulus, curo: neque te ministrum
dedecet myrtus neque me sub arta
uite bibentem.

A woman with thin blond hair and shadowed eyes
Sat, elbows locked, both hands wedged
Beneath her thighs, like the nervous child she was
So recently. Across the table, a man
Thin-bearded, with an almost-kindly smile—
Well-meaning, in a strange administrative way—
Laid out the terms of their relationship.
The married hand shuffled through the paper
Sheets, the terms of her hire and her release—
Threats even more dire than the job description.
He explained what might be required of her
At the grill or frigid drive-through window sill.
She listened. Every word he spoke proclaimed
The limits of her world, recalling her
Broken home, another halfway-household,
Like the one she now just barely owned.
She slipped a strand of hair behind her ear,
Where the curve caught the echo of her hope and fear.

The last man sits wrapped in blankets, his little kerosene lantern casting more shadows than light. A sunset, all red and indigo, illuminates the grimy frost on the window, but his back is turned. He should have covered that window to keep the heat in, but he never did. He can't turn his head to look anymore. That's okay. The window is there, and that's what matters. The blankets stir as he pulls them closer about him, hoping to find a bit more warmth. He doesn't.

He looks at the silent, cold fireplace, eyes yellowing and tired, wondering if he did rightly. The corner of a bit of paper pokes out of the deadened ash, crisp and white and angular where it touches air, black and jagged where it touches dust. A date is visible, but he can't read it. Too much mist separates his eyes from the world and his mind from his eyes. June. Maybe it says June. Lovely June, when the snow wasn't so deep.

The light fades. Rheumy eyes fall closed as the last man pictures the sunset. The sun touches the horizon, sinking into bands of ever deeper and richer colors, colors reflected in the snow, the only colors left. That's lovely too, seeing the last colors, but not like June before the snow. Before the snow? He'd been able to remember, once upon a time. When he started to forget, he'd written it down. Everything he could. Memory. It's all there, still all there; he can see the words in his mind's eye, trace their outlines, but he can't understand anymore.

Pens lie scattered in a corner like old bones. He's been throwing them into that corner for years, at least probably. He doesn't know how long he's lived in that little room by any measurement other men could have understood. He's counted the time in cans of food, in sips of melted snow, in the desperate search for things to burn, in the desiccated pens, their dried blood living on in words on paper. He isn't counting anymore. Cans sit unopened on the floor beside him. The water bottle rests under the blanket, but his touch reveals ice forming beneath the plastic.

The shivers begin. The glow of the kerosene lamp betrays the amount of fuel remaining. He can live through the night, he knows. Eat a little, drink a little, and live a bit longer. He has before, surviving on canned food, sips of water, embers in the fireplace and

the half-light of burning kerosene or oil or alcohol. Stay awake. What should he do when the sun comes up? He used to go out and find things to eat or drink or burn. He tries to remember his last trip. A week ago? More? Looking for what? He has plenty of canned food around him, and a liter of half-thawed water beneath the blanket. He'd needed something to burn. He had walked beneath the heatless sun, feet leaving scars in the snow, the blinding plain stretching away in every direction except where the occasional building or ice-encrusted tree interrupted it. A man could believe that the world was flat while looking at such a landscape, at pale snowfire and dead, hard horizon.

The man starts to weep, tears sticking in his beard and freezing. He hadn't found anything to burn on his walk, he remembers. He stares into the fireplace, forcing his eyes to stay open, ignoring the chill radiating inward from the moisture on his cheeks. He twists the blanket tighter, letting the bottle tumble out, hearing it thud to the floor, hearing it grumble as it rolls against a wall, hearing it grumble that he will have nothing to drink in the morning. Stay awake.

The last man shifts his right arm, wondering if he can disentangle it from the blankets, if reaching out would be worthwhile. Pain shoots from his wrist to his shoulder. Carpal tunnel. Arthritis. Stiffness. Cold. He lets the arm lie. The cold is a token of the air, the stiffness, inactivity,

the arthritis, simple age. The carpal tunnel is left over from writing, constant writing. Everything he could remember but wouldn't, given time. The smell of old wood and old books. June. The touch of a hand on his. Stories. Names. All captured in the ink of one-hundred and thirty-nine cheap ballpoint pens. Notebooks and paper of every sort. Stay awake.

The tears in his beard have frozen and none remain in his eyes. In the box at his side are a dozen new pens, never uncapped. They don't freeze, even at night. He doesn't have any paper left. A sob tries to climb his cracked throat, but he can't remember why he is sad. He has nothing to write. Sleep.

The shivers stop. He doesn't feel cold anymore, except inside. The pain leaves. The last man barely feels the crusty softness of the old blanket, the hardness of the floor. He doesn't have a bed, not anymore. His only furniture is a steel bookshelf set against the wall. It's empty now. His eyes close again. He'd been so cold. Made the choice. Found something to burn. Now they're gone. It's gone. Sleep.

He sleeps.

The kerosene flame grows tired, flickers, and goes out.

If you stood here beside me now, we'd both
Be ankle deep in mud. You always loved
The messy squish of spring. A good thing, too;
You're buried in it—six feet deep or more.

Your dog is sniffing last year's moldy leaves,
And scratching at the filth. I'll have to wash
Him. But he wanted so a walk. Perhaps
He really wanted you. I'll say that's true.

We were friends, good true friends, although I liked
Clean winter more than spring. Still do, in fact:
A kind cold snow to freeze my heart, because
Were it to thaw, I'd cry like springtime rain.

Title *Control*

Author *Samantha Gilman*

Truth be told, I can control
Nothing, partly or in whole.
Stronger clenched, Effects, like sand
Drift away to join the land.

