

## THE HOSPITAL

This must be the world I always wanted. Complete with the God I wanted to believe. It must be the woman I didn't have, the courage to go for even when she wanted me. It was an accidental failure, the loss of belief and still I'm forgiven. It must be the hope that the life I imagined could be. In the distance there are the mountains with glaciers on top that I can ski. And this time, the boots fit perfectly and my legs carve through the powder in curtains spreading white before me.

On the other side of the street, a flag blows in a gentle breeze cooling the day to the temperature that lives me. Any time now, I'm going to fly, though I don't have to. Now, she's every bit as smart as I am, and she loves the same stories. Whenever we fight, we settle with her admitting it was her fault and I was right all along. Now I'm going to stand up and walk to the edge of the hill, take a big breath and exhale. No matter which way I turn, the world applauds.

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## BLUEBERRIES

The war is finally over. The hospital's are filled with the dying and those still alive but crippled for life. The beautiful women have come to congratulate us and invite us into their lives. They've taken off all their clothes and all we can do is dream. This is the life I always wanted. And now that it's here, I don't have to live. The sky is perfectly blue and the warmth of the spring bathes us. Anytime now, I'll remember how to save the world from the horror every one dreams. Any day now, blueberries are ripe, the tomatoes huge and the music everyone wanted washes the air. The friends who have died surround me and promise the only future I ever wanted. Even the wife who left me is making her way back filled with apology and promise to be the woman I wanted.

The rest of the story is loaded with explosions and secrets I'm sure to discover. It begins with the house I found in a forest where no one lives. It started with a chainsaw in a book my sons come to hate, but he doesn't understand the way he's got to be bigger than me and cut through the fodder I've been trying as long as breath to clear. That he'll have to get under the old car that stopped running and turn it himself into the magic ship he can drive as the world falls away and he is left, alone, in a forest to sight the limits he'll have to explain to his children. The brother who died will come back and explain what's waiting for all of us, including the mother so rich and famous we can't keep up.

That won't stop us because there's a story our whole lives are bound to be telling, as long as we breathe. It begins with this accident and iambic pentameter. There are all the speeches we spend our lives trying to remember. For me, it began with a chainsaw and a book about the men trying to found a union to get paid for the logs they were sending down river, amid trees taller than anyone, on the way to Japan and places so far we can only tell stories we barely imagine.

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## MIRACLES

In the hole, I dug out the footings, poured the concrete and laid down the lumber, put the pieces together and raised up a wall. The first one was a foot too short, but I finally managed to make the first part right. I'd like to think I did it alone, though I remember I needed help when it came to the roof. The days I climbed up and nailed in the rafters, there was every bird I dreamed calling the way. Meantime, vegetables grew a few yards behind it. Then it was time to hang the doors, build out a deck and, in back, make a porch. It took a year before I could put in the screens required against the hail of mosquitoes and flies that came out like a war whenever the summer arrived. On a good day, we walked to the river and took off our clothes to swim. That house is still there with the angel that guided each stroke. It's flying toward me whenever I look, though I'm buried in paper and news I never wanted. The story remains what it was. The only thing that changes is the weather and even that within the range we always knew.

Today, for instance, another spring goes on without me, whether or not I dream. Maybe tomorrow I'll walk again and actually believe the same God everyone talks about. In the meantime, all I've got is disappointment and the hope I can forget these things I can't stand and that I'm wrong about that God they all have so much faith in.