

Sunday Morning

We were reading a story about William Thompson, the English-born railway worker who feigned death while he was scalped by Cherokees, who lived to retrieve his scalp after it fell from a warrior's belt, put it in a pail of water and even tried to have doctors sew it back on his head. Before he died, many years later, he mailed that scalp to the Omaha library, and they put it on display. His hair is still healthy-looking and gleaming in its dried-up scalp. We were reading aloud about Witold Pilecki, the Polish hero who walked voluntarily into Auschwitz in 1940 and stayed for three years, documenting what he saw. We were reading that the oceans are rising more quickly than predicted. We were reading about the eyesight of swifts and kites, of hawks and eagles and crows. We were reading a review of that movie about the strange planet hurtling into the earth, how the power would fail and cars wouldn't start and people would have trouble breathing. We were only half-reading about the music of Wagner's later period. Instead, we were reading about Susan Sontag's diaries, how grandiose and self-involved she was. We were skimming a review of a book about John Berryman, who was even more grandiose and self-involved; about sculptures in the snow that melt when the snow melts, whose melting is their truest form. Then we were reading about the vast rivers underground that gush out in millions of gallons every hour. We were wistfully reading about a Japanese spa where we could drink small cups of green tea while we sat in a pool of warm water, being scrubbed or massaged, while the breeze fluttered the curtains which fell across the open door, to push them open wide enough for us to see the garden's rocks and sculpted waterfalls. We were reading small poems then, not quite haiku, of Basho and Dogen: *A snowy heron on the snowfield/where the winter grass is unseen/hides itself/in its own figure.* We were putting our reading aside and going out to work in our garden, to listen to the cardinals and mockingbirds and mourning doves, to smell the spearmint we'd planted by the henna tree. It was raining then, softly, and we let ourselves get wet, soaked through to the skin, which belonged to us now.

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