Another early morning, fishing from the dock (with Alzheimer disease)

Nathan P. Young, DO

Looking back, I thought it peculiar:
I saw the blue heron rise from the shallows of Rocky Point,
water dripping from its feet.
And I saw the fish rising, the flat lake anticipating boil.
I was watching him as always;
morning cup of coffee
looking down from the deck
from the side of the newspaper,
when, just out from the lily pads,
the bobber twitched, then sank.
I held my breath until,
the Great Fish jumped,
and was gone.
I could hear the story;
I could see the look on his face.

That same morning, I felt
the gaze of a shaky legged fawn;
a moment shared, followed
by a twig snap and rustling of underbrush
between sugar maples,
bright, barren, and now greening once again.
At one time we could fit two hands around a trunk.
We laughed about how we'd grow old together,
how we'd look with old ears and noses
that keep growing, like trees
accumulating yearly rings of wisdom.

His rings are like a great solar system, I know.
I've seen him grow and change into the old man that he is.
A beautiful old man with those ears and that funny nose.
He is a husband and a father, a friend to many.
He is so many things.
And I would know, I do know, I still know.
But wonder if I could have been more watchful.
Was there something I missed or could have done?
Too many hard winters that left him vulnerable?
At the time, he seemed just a bit slow to thaw.

The moment otherwise came and went
with the wake of the great fish.
Vivid and perfect circles, emanating
but insidiously calmed by
mysterious and thieving,
plaques and tangles,
vanishing like the heron, in silence.

The fog lifted;
slightly stooped he climbed the steps.
Looking back now, I heard his story
though painfully and beautifully,
from my own memory.

He looked up at me and only smiled.
He reached out his hand and I held it.

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