



# Rivers of Season

A Short Collection

WENDELL BECKON

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### **Foreword**

*Rivers of Season* gathers five stories written between 2022 - 2024. Though fictional, each piece is rooted in prairie memory, reflection, and the quiet resilience of ordinary lives. Read them as a conversation between painting and prose—a crossing of mediums in search of whatever grace might exist beyond the visible world.

### **About the Author**

George Wendell Baker is a Canadian painter, poet, and short-story writer who has lived in southern Taiwan since 2005. Working under the pseudonym **Wendell Beckon** for his prose, he explores metaphysics, prairie folklore, and the liminal space between seen and unseen worlds. His visual work can be found at [georgewendellbaker.com](http://georgewendellbaker.com).

*These stories are dedicated to*

**The Bakers, my grandparents Emily, Jim and Ray and  
to Bob Boyer.**

## Saskatchewan River

*I* remember the long trails of dust bellowing behind pick-ups speeding down gravel roads. At night they looked like smoldering cigarettes in a stone obsidian ashtray. An onyx nocturne sculpted by carmine embers leisurely devoured by the horizon. In summers Aquila climbed beyond the thermals, glinting in the deified cosmos. Old folks would say, *"there's nothing like the prairie sky on a summer night."*

We'd lay on the hood of the car drinking Pilsner and smoking Export A's. Wheat kings of grain elevators and bonspiel, anointed by the aurora. Pondering the sandhill cranes on their night flight overhead, I took wing imagining that I followed them to Corpus Christi.

Often lost in thoughts of distant places where the winters didn't gnarl so hard - or long. The arrival of spring brought amnesty from cabin fever, turning the pastures laurel under the cerulean sky that brought us the returning cranes.

The smell of grass pollen and prairie dust invited memories of days long forgotten. Valleys carved by giants with stone bluffs and curious petroglyphs. And the hand prints of people that watched the herds of buffalo reach far beyond sight, ebbing past like the Saskatchewan River.

## **The Amulet**

Something stabbed me in the ribs lurching me upright in agony. The pain that I thought I was dreaming remained. I examined my fist confused, trying to recall if I had bashed myself. Nightmares tended to linger for a while in a vague tableau. Scanning the bedroom shadows trying to elucidate an assailant, I had no memory of it. I could trace the sore rib with my finger for several years before the crash.

Sepia stained tiles oscillated from the vapors emanating through the ceiling vent. I bore a sudden disgust at the sputtled wet cough beside me. Glancing down at my encased foot slung above a blue bed sheet, I could hear sounds of the ward outside the door.

I had slammed onto a guard rail in the whiteout and launched into a culvert. Black ice. I searched with my finger to find the sore spot on my rib and was drawn into a setting clear as any recent event.

It was a battle. There were trenches and explosions and men roaring in a fight among hundreds. Mud squished around my ears as I clawed at the coat of a man with piercing grey eyes and grimacing teeth over a walrus moustache. He was pinning me while I was fighting to push him back. A Pickelhaube helmet appeared and a second later a bayonet stabbed deep into my waist. I wheezed in searing agony and went black.

Removing my finger, the vision dimmed.

The ceiling tiles and wet cough riposted with the nauseating odor of hospital disinfectant. Muddled, I fumbled with the gurney switch, irritated by my confinement. Again, grasping at my rib, I emerged in a place that I did not recognize.

A blizzard gale pelted us sidelong, rocking me in the saddle. I hunched over the pinto, bracing from the cold. Her eyelashes and whiskers were crusted with pellets of ice as we led the two stray cattle in from down at the coulee. As we passed the gate, I thought I saw light flickering through the slats inside the barn.

My folks had gone to Maple Creek and I was the only one at the ranch. I held the .22 Remington over the withers gripping the reins in my other hand. I had carried it in case I needed to put down one of the steers in the coulee.

We maneuvered beside the barn under the eave where the ground was not yet covered with crusted drifts. The barn roof pitched for a few feet over the eave offering a bit of cover muting the wind. Muffled words sounded low and hushed from voices on the other side. I contemplated dismounting but decided against it; I didn't want to fight to get back on a spooked horse.

I muttered; *"It's probably a neighbor."*

The pinto clicked forward as I turned the corner leaning over the saddle horn to see. Facing thirty feet away, a worn two-wheeled cart stood with a thin ash-coloured horse in front. Beside it, holding the reins, a small figure wrapped in a gray blanket stared back at me through the face-hole with wide dark eyes. She turned, calling to someone at the barn, saying something that I didn't catch. A figure hurried toward her.

"Hey!" I shouted. *"What are you doing?"*

He didn't look back. They leapt onto the seat, slapping the reins hard, and the buggy lurched to an instant trot. It screeched off, vanishing as a shadow swallowed by the blowing storm.

I didn't move my rifle an inch.

The wind slacked closer to the ground as I got off to lead the Pinto to the open door. A set of wet prints led across the wooden floorboards to the stalls. Dad's horses were in the stall closest to the door with the gate half-open. I gathered they were after the draft horses. Stolen cattle usually found their way into Montana while theirs came north.

The memory of the Cypress Hills massacre was still in the air at the time. It happened around thirty years before. I didn't know if that had a bearing on my hesitation to draw up the rifle, but seeing horse thieves brought the thought to mind.

In the early 70's, wolfers had come up from Montana claiming their horses were stolen by some local Indians. I never studied the details but everyone knew the story. They showed up near Abe Farwell's trading post and ended up massacring nearly twenty Assiniboiné. The Assiniboiné didn't have the horses. The government brought in the *North West Mounted Rifles* after that to keep an eye on things near the border at Fort Walsh.

The sound inside the barn was muted while the wind howled and slapped against its wooden skin. I closed the gate and rubbed Sam's nose, reassuring him that he wasn't going out into the storm. The pinto shuffled and snorted, reminding me to get her dry and fed.

Outside, where the buggy had stood, I inspected the tracks already filling in with drifts. I almost missed the small object powder-covered by a skiff of snow. Blowing it off, I saw it was a coin-sized seashell with a small hole bored near the edge- silver-pearl on one side and charcoal on the other. I prodded it with my finger flipping it over several times in my palm. It looked like an amulet.

I slipped it into my pocket where I carried it for years, like a jack knife or lucky coin. I believed we got lucky that day. I thought of it as a piece of evidence while we never reported anything. Dad decided it wasn't worth pursuing.

No one ever came back. And time sort of forgot about it and soon after I made the trip to Swift Current on my way to join the 95<sup>th</sup> Saskatchewan Rifles in Regina. I was in the fields of France two months later.

*January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1916*

*The Germans despise us. To say that it's personal would be understated. The ferocity of our Canadian units will be remembered by those who survive it. We are a terrible enemy who sang off to war from the trains and ships at Halifax. We sing our own anthem in the voice that sets us apart from our allies. It is also true, from the Mont des Cats to Ypres to the Regina Trench in Somme, that the songs have become quieter as the calamity has mounted around us. We celebrate our victories, but the enthusiasm for war has muted in the mud and remains of a hundred thousand men and horses. It can't be inculcated with rye whiskey as it once had.*

*I hope this is the last one. I'm certain some men are ready to break. But I caught wind that there might be a few, if any more, night raids. The close-quarter mayhem is terrifying even for the most hardened men, while they'd never admit it. You could be dead at any second, screaming men amidst the sound of metal against bone and more blood than anyone has ever seen.*

*I suppose I sound unnerved, but I think that any of us who make it out of here will not be the same. I can't see how violence on this scale won't be answered, for in some manner. No one, them or us, is in denial of the brutality we inflict, but it all gets buried in slogans national pride. They are wrong, and we know it. Invaders, the Kaiser and his Huns. I also think that some of them never wanted anything to do with this. But I will never say that out loud.*

*Most of our men don't care, and eagerly bash them to death in their sleep. I don't judge, but I carry out my orders with my own mind. It's the only way I'll be able to take it back with me.*

*Some in our ranks treat the fighting like a tournament. I think they believe this will*

*keep them from going mad, but I'm not certain that it isn't too late. The fervor in which we fight shows a kind of blood sport played for keeps. The losers don't speak again unless we let them and we seldom do.*

*Others in the ranks are too far gone, their eyes glazed wide, lost in terror. 'Shell shocked' as they say. I've never seen anything like it. It usually happens from an explosion. One minute a man appears normal, and the next he's blown into shock that doesn't recover. He can't stop shaking and that's the end of him. I didn't see anyone who came back from that.*

*I carry my sweetheart's picture. It's the only thing keeping my mind together in this madness. There is such irony in the stupendous weapons of our age having proven effective in bringing us to the very depths of our lowest nature.* \*

Alighting onto the platform at Swift Current with my rucksack slung over my shoulder, I nearly stumbled into a small woman wrapped in a burgundy shawl leaning against the train station pillar. She glanced up shifting to avoid the collision, seeming to ignore my clumsiness as I apologized.

Her face appeared amoretto.

The rucksack plonked down onto the platform, punctuating my awkwardness. I reached into my pocket fumbling for the amulet among the coins and empty shell casings. Fishing it out, I held it in my palm turning it over with my finger. The charcoal had faded to a light powdered gray while the silver- pearl still had some sheen. She looked up at me as I held out my open hand.

*"I believe this is yours... it was a long time ago,"* I spoke, lifting her hand setting it onto her palm.

Staring at the talisman, she pursed her lip while the train cogwheels began to clamor behind us. We met in a moment of deliverance through a blizzard that had disfigured the world. Stepping away, I thought I heard a quiet voice.



## Churchwarden

He kept on farming out of necessity and not for love of the land. It wasn't that he didn't love the land, but that the esurience devouring the West robbed from him his love of farming. That is how he put it, woolgathering across the yard rubbing the Brigham with his thumb. Unspun patches of an afghan folded across the prairies, while my grandpa plodded on in gum boots and leather hands.

Energetic in his youth, he played hockey on the frozen ponds in winter. He'd met my grandmother at the curling rink in Lafleche and she said he was the finest curler she ever knew. He was up before sunrise, summer or winter, with a smell of Old Spice. Though he was never known to attend church on Sundays, he'd put on a white button shirt for a trip to the local café for lunch. I once heard him say that he believed in *Divine Grace*, but had little time for hearing about it. Bonspiel was as close to a religious gathering as it came for him.

My dad had become a councilman for a while, half-heartedly imagining bigger aims. He would now and then trope, "*modern thinking in the modern world*" like scripture from some imaginary federal pulpit. Grampa would look at me through the winced squint of one eye and whisper out of the side of his mouth, "*sycophant.*"

It was around the time of the Falklands War. I remember being jolted awake like a dozing cat when he slapped his thigh, roaring at the TV, "*That son of a bitch! Balding ferret with the arrogance of Caesar! Why should we appease those who don't give a damn about anything but themselves? That weasel is out to destroy the spirit of the West since he clearly has nothing but contempt for us!*"

We'd sit on the porch on warm days drinking ice tea and playing cribbage. Perennial ivy crawled up the lattice between the brimming pots of petunias and

geraniums, permeating the smell of summer and baked into memory like the warm buns we'd slather with homemade jam. Beryl skies would sullen dark nimbus clouds delivering an overture of tapping rain on the corrugated roof. A crescendo of thunder inevitably came with the proverbial, *"Hope it doesn't hail."*

~

My mom was about to walk out the door to attend my sister's courthouse wedding when a glass shattered behind her on the dining room floor. The crash made her jump nearly dropping the gift box she was holding. She turned slowly as if moving too fast might provoke a scene worse than the mess of broken glass on the oriental carpet.

*"If you step out that door, do not bother coming back,"* my dad snarled between his teeth.

He glared with a tottered loathing that pierced deeper than any distain at my sister's fiancée. While she had always forgiven his inebriated seething, she seemed to reach a place where she could no longer fictionize him as a provider. Turning away, she spoke facing the open door.

*"I can either send someone for my things or you can step out while I collect them. Whichever makes you more comfortable."*

She stepped out onto the steps and pulled the door closed behind her.

I was eleven, but somehow sensed it was best and that the slow vapor she exhaled into the frozen winter was imbued with relief. She paused for a second, looking down, and smiled slightly like people do at church when they say amen.

She moved to town and I'd meet her after school at the café. She'd drive me home and drop me off at the head of the driveway. The next summer she moved to Regina to take a job working for the municipality and I only saw her on holidays. I

wanted to go live with her but she asked me to stay with Grandpa who she thought needed me more. She never lost her fondness of him or him of her.

~

Laying on my bed looking at my hockey card of Tiger Williams, I thought I heard a car pulling into the driveway. I reached down pulling out a Playboy that I had stuffed under my mattress and flipped to Miss September. She was posed as a school girl with breasts peeking through her open blouse. She held her plaid skirt to one side with a hooked finger while sitting legs open on a round black ottoman. I drew the page closer to my face to inspect her pubic hair when I heard the thumping of someone coming up the stairs and shoved it back under the mattress.

Grandpa's voice called my name from the other side of the door and I replied, *"I'm coming Gramp, wait a sec!"*

I opened the door and he stood there with a grim face.

*"What is it?"* I asked.

He spoke in a hushed voice.

*"Your uncle Ron is here and I don't want to be alone with him. I need you to help distract things."*

We crossed the driveway to where my uncle was leaning against his blue Chevy Impala looking towards the crabapple trees heavy with fruit. Smiling wide, he looked like a salesman.

*"Are you planning to give some of those apples away this year Dad? I know a few people at the church who'd love to make jam with them?"*

*"Sure, help yourself. There's an ice-cream pail in the shed if you want."*

*"Not today, Dad. I'll ask some folks if anyone is interested. Maybe someone will come by."*

Grandpa crossed his arms, glancing at me, knowing this was a warm-up to what my uncle was actually here to talk about.

*"It's a nice community, Dad. They're good people and I know you'd like them. You just need to ask the Lord into your heart and you will be blessed Jehovahah."*

I could feel his temper churning like a kettle rumbling over a red stove element.

*"On my word I pray, it's the only way to be saved,"* Ron said, reaching his arms in the air as if to touch the spirit itself.

Grandpa replied in a punctuated growl that rattled like a 30-30 firing throughout the yard:

*"The GOD of this universe does **not** require us to harvest souls!*

*HE is not so petty and vain, or desperate for parishioners. Those are the desires of men, those of an imposter- projections of self-worship, opposite to that which connects us to HIS creation without saying.*

*Yes, we acknowledge our failures as fact, since freewill exists within all of us.*

*Love- isn't that the message? Humble ourselves and be done with it?*

*But God doesn't bloody well require affected gestures!*

*Never has. Never will."*

Ron stared at the ground like he'd been handed a felony. After a moment, he smiled at me from one side of his cheek, nodded and climbed into his blue Impala. He backed out of the driveway on the crackling gravel.

I knew Grandpa felt bad, but he just couldn't tolerate any sort of pontificating. He stood for his own way of life and wasn't about to be told he wasn't good enough from a man in catalogue shoes.

Late the following winter my dad took his life in the tool shed. Drink escorted him to the precipice where he finally met his end. We never spoke of it. Silence permeated the house, speaking only with the ticks of its old age. My grandfather was cast long prior, knowing Dad had died years before his body followed. We tore down the shed the next spring planting a willow tree in its place.

Mom returned for visits again and we'd sit on the porch drinking ice tea.

The years receded his desiccated hands. In the colours of fall; pumpkins, squash and gourds around the porch. Summer passed into another autumn and the harvest moon sat orange above the trees. Grandpa drifted away one evening sitting on the porch with the briar of his churchwarden still warm in his hand. In the other, a folded page—titled in his spidery hand, *"Through Cottonwoods"* it said.

*A cello moan through cottonwoods.*

*Omniscient dreaming leaves and sprig.*

*I grew here by chance or by the grace of her nature.*

*I know not.*

*Starved in parched winters and bathed in the spring rains that smell of dust.*

*The soil of memory and lives spent through to the end.*

*Standing limbs stretched as far as imagination can take me.*

*My roots unseen.*

*I know not where they go or from where they are fed.*

*Into the depths of an unknowable world drawing itself.*

*And yet I am here.*

*I stand in spite of the demand for my flesh.*

*Silhouette on the event horizon.*

*Time.*

*Patient in its devouring. Shameless and absolute.*

*I service the air and exuberant young who climb me.*

*The old who stare through my boughs to see the past.*

*I was here before I was born.*

*Planted in a farmer's dream.*

*For the love of living things that stand above us.*

*And the winds that pass through cottonwoods.*

~

## Little Bears

I loved climbing trees when I was a kid and took my tree-climbing seriously. I would judge any town we visited by the quality of its accessible boughs. I was an aficionado of climbing trees. The huge poplars behind our rental were alluring but sprung branches that grew out of reach. I would have to venture out further with a pocket full of mojos on my search for a flawless perch. A town would drop to a *C minus* if there were no decent climbing trees in its best park. And that was a grade I knew well, so I'd make the best of it.

One afternoon not long after we'd arrived, I was startled by a loud bark and jumped back from a wire gate. It was the only thing between me and two huge yellow-ochre Chesapeake Bays -burly mammoth demons with an infernal glare. I knew enough to be properly frightened. The grassy lot between theirs and ours served as a scouting place to know if they were around. Someone told me they were trained which didn't mean a damn thing to me. Trained for *what*? I figured *that* training likely didn't include never biting nosey kids of the tree-climbing variety. The tall hedges that lined their yard obscured their presence while acting as a clear boundary. I steered a wide berth from the demon's lair and seldom, if ever, went past the empty lot beside the fourplex.

In mid-summer while in the midst of a grounding that strictly confined me to the four-plex sidewalk, I stood looking out of my cell at the edge of the steps. A young black bear appeared across the lot in front of me and jaunted down the road. I bolted home and burst open the door shouting, "*Mom, I saw a bear! A bear just ran past me!*"

Unimpressed, she stuck her head out of the kitchen and yelled down to me, "*you have to stop that lying, kiddo!*" A moment later the phone rang with someone from the local detachment saying that a bear had run through town. My mom apologized.

The Chesapeake Bays were scarier than that little black bear while the bear story had a lot of traction and found its way into family lore well past my grandparent's lifetimes. The bear ended up dead, shot at the edge of town. The dogs lived on and were far more menacing as far as I could tell. The absurdity of this was not lost upon me and only served to fuel my mistrust of the grown-up world.

We'd moved there when I was five. *The North*—actually mid-province, since there was a lot more north above us—but this was *The North* to us by all accounts. It was still farming country, but the woods were noticeably denser with deciduous and coniferous trees. Patches of land separated thick corridors of poplar, birch, and spruce.

My best pal Marc had a famous name that meant nothing to me at the time, but seemed inherent in his sureness. He was a sturdy confident kid that seemed more like a rival when we first met. One of our favorite things to do was tree-climbing around chokecherry bushes. We'd gorge ourselves like bears and hang in the crux of tree branches sticking out our purple tongues. Knowing black bears could climb, our plan was to stomp on their paws and scuttle up to the thinnest reaches. Luckily, we never had to test that out.

Marc fit himself into a tree-fork that looked like he was sitting in a high-chair.

*"Did I ever tell you about my uncle?"* He said.

*"I don't think so."*

*"He disappeared a few years ago. My Gran told me."*

*"It was pretty weird, eh. My uncle was kind'of a serious guy. He minded his own business and didn't drink anything except pine needle tea. He had a cabin north of the lake."*



*My aunt wasn't there at the time. She works at Batoche for the summer, eh."*

*"Oh ya? Hm, maybe a bear got him." I said.*

*"Yeah, but they usually find you since you can only go so far. If it's an animal, there's clothes and bones or whatever.*

*They searched for weeks. My aunt walked those woods for a long time looking for August. I bet she still does sometimes. The cops even came and said some foul play might have happened.*

*"Woaw! What did they say?"*

*"They asked if my uncle owed money or somethin. My dad told'em August didn't care about money except for supplies. He made enough from his hides."*

*"They never came back." He said.*

*"Your aunt must be sad."*

*"She was for a long time. They said there wasn't closure, but I didn't know what that meant.*

*My uncle wasn't the kind of guy to get lost. He wasn't a 'slip off the rocks' type. He didn't fool around, eh. You could drop him in the middle of Vietnam and he'd be the one to make it out."*

*"Someone said he must've run off because that was more likely than him getting lost. Who knows. Except he had no reason to go anywhere. Run where? P.A.? Saskatoon? For what? I doubt it. He didn't like cities or people who liked cities. He didn't even own a car."*

*"So, what do you think happened?" I asked.*

Marc stared off.

*"I dunno. But like Gran said, it's something weird, eh. The cop's dogs wouldn't search. They went out and came back saying the dogs wouldn't track anywhere and just laid down beside them, whimpering."*

*"He disappeared into thin air and he was solid as granite."*

~~~

Trouble, even small smatterings of it, always looked fun at first. I seemed to be drawn to it with an ensnaring promise of escapade as time was often painfully stretched by some cruel hand.

It's always odd for me when someone's name appears to suit them perfectly. Yogie, was one of those. He had a predatory look. The first time I met him during recess he bared his teeth and growled at me. His black almond eyes were often pressed together in a mean squint and he always smelled like old blankets. I never got why they called him Yogie when he said his name was Ollie, but I hated his guts and only ever called him -Yogie.

*"Hey Con-rat! You think you're better than me cuz your dad's a pig, eh?"*

He would always shoot off his mouth until Travis Dumont threatened to punch him out. I don't remember where he came from but it was somewhere around Buffalo Narrows.

My first serious run-in came through Yogie. I was heading home when I came across him playing with a BB gun on the road across from the rodeo grounds. It was one of those pump up pellet guns advertised in *Outdoor Life*. I was jealous that he had one, wondering where he got it. Naturally, he aimed it at me when he saw me coming up the road.

*"Hey Conrad, maybe I can just shoot you,"* he cackled.

I ducked covering my face. *"Come on Yogie, quit it!"*

*"Ah, just jokin, eh!"* He said taking aim at the street lamp.

*"Maybe I could hit the light. Do you think it'll break?"*

*"Not sure! I heard those have some power."*

He took a shot and missed. *"Shit!"*

Pinching another pellet from his lips he reloaded and pumped the handle four times.

*"Here, you try,"* he said, shoving it to me.

I was wary of his friendliness, but keen to try it. My parents would never allow one.

*"We're going to get into trouble,"* I muttered, aiming at the light.

*"Awe, don't be chicken,"* he snickered.

I aimed and squeezed the trigger. *PING!*

The pellet hit the metal rim. I was disappointed by my aim, but relieved thinking it might have broken the light.

*"It has some power!"* I said.

*"Awe, you suck!"* He said, grabbing the pellet gun back.

He reloaded, pumping the handle four times and took aim. It sounded a *puff*

then - *CRACK!* The lens shattered into chunks and fell like ice off a garage

eave. I jumped back in a sudden grasp of fear.

*This was bad!* Gaping for a moment at the broken glass on the road, I turned and ran full throttle into the shadows across the yards and alleys towards home.

*"I knew you were a chicken shit, Con-rat!"* He yelled behind me.

This was one of those times when I knew I was in deep. The minutes and hours magnified into agony waiting for the phone to ring. I ruminated hope that no one saw us or that he got out of there somehow.

Dinner came and went while Dad worked the evening shift.

Mom asked me before bed, *"what did you do with Marc and Travis today?"*

*"Not much. Just hung out."*

Sleep was intermitted. The next morning, I listened to my dad getting ready for work while I hid under the covers. I could hear his police shoes heavy on the kitchen floor as he left for work. My plan was to stay in the back yard thinking I should lay low. By late afternoon I held hope that nothing would happen when his Cutlass pulled into the driveway. I could tell by the look on his face - my hope was lost.

*"We caught Ollie with a pellet gun and he said you shot out a street light. Did you shoot a street lamp?"* he demanded with thumbs hooked on the hips of his belt.

*"No!"* I said. *"He did!"*

*"Did you play around with a BB gun with Ollie?"* He pressed.

*"No, I just saw him with it and came right home. Yogie hates me!"*

Concussions of fear and doubt toggled while I mediated over what might come with a confession that I handled the gun.

*"Jim! He said he didn't do it!"* Mom protested in my defense.

Dad paused, pursing his lips to one side skeptical of my innocence.

*"Fine, but if I find out that it WAS you - there will be hell to pay!"*

I had no illusions about what that would be like. He left it at that, but it took a while for the worry to fade not knowing if an onlooker would surface.

Yogie was the first real bully I knew. I was glad that he didn't stick around though my fear of him significantly diminished after a school assembly on November 11th.

The whole school sat cross-legged on the gym floor with teachers facing us on either side of the podium. We were in the midst of the minute of silence when Ollie returned from the washroom and plopped down, erupting a crackling wet fart as he dropped to the floor.

I thought I might die. Ms. Andrews scowled and hushed us with her finger to her lips but all was lost. The hilarity spread like a contagion of mustard gas across the gymnasium floor. No matter how much we fought to push down our giggles pinching our noses and holding our guts, the gravity of that Remembrance Day ceremony never fully recovered. The grim distain on Principal Grayson's face loomed above us like death over the Allied trenches of World War I.

## Wascana Creek

He sat atop of John Nugent's sculpture looking towards the lake. Huge slabs of rust colored iron assembled and held frozen in a moment of time like sheets of paper accidentally dropped in the wind. How remarkable that something so discernibly heavy could appear so light. He knew he shouldn't be on it, while merely standing beside it was not enough. It wasn't an act of impudence. He sought to infuse its creative energies into his bones; steep in the artist's vision that was projected onto his inner walls.

It's hard to fathom how he came to be here. Such was the contrast from his adolescent naivety that saw only rusted forms of junk around the artist's studio in the valley of his youth. His thoughts - thin and programmed. His foolish soul apparently blotted out by the glare of popular illusions. But so it was. The narrow tunnel of perception mirrored on all sides as the various probable fates hung before him.

Somehow, he had clawed his way through to a wider opening and the spring sanguinity of maturity. He imagined notions of a future he would not see in reality. The trajectory of chance sent him around the world in search of truth and himself. And as he arrived at the vista of realization, having finally gaffed his shadows from the black waters of his own abyss, they came into focus long enough for him to see them for what they were.

Life is suffering and beauty, tumbling down the hill together with insane laughter. Joy and sorrow, two sides of the same currency minted by creation and flung into the universe. He could not foresee the life that he would foster as he perched atop the hardened steel that appeared light as paper. He did not know that the oscillating rhythm of awareness would open and gift him with filaments of insight. Grace speaks softly having us press our ear to her door in the hush of our din. She cautions to be wary of mirages that appear as bated lures in the pools of reflection. He listened to hear the whisper tell him to trust what he sensed but could not know.

## **Rivers of Season**

### **A Short Collection**

**\*\*\***

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