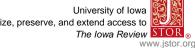
In My Father's Cabin · Kathy Engel

Today we walked into the forest to a place where the pines have parted in a circle to let the light in, where under thick green moss is damp mulch, the sweet home. It was so soft and moist underfoot. you'd think anything could grow, you'd think there was only growing and warm. The knobs on the maples, like chestnuts, those extra toes on horses' legs, grow in the dark the way things always grow and die in the dark and you miss them. That's why tonight I'll sit here while everyone sleeps, and look out at the cuts and dives on Camel's Hump and listen to Turk's curving bark at the foot of the hill, so nothing no one will leave while I'm asleep.

Tonight Northern Lights streak across a dark sky and my father walks out of this cabin he built, anytime, to pee anywhere he chooses, the tap of Vermont air waking him, waking him. Up here, between woods and meadow, the wind turns you like age.

Up here,

my father doesn't care what time it is, snowshoeing up the hill in winter, pulling his food on a sled, or at the table writing on a yellow lined pad the film he has always wanted to write.



Soon it will be morning and my father will be standing at the door asking, "Anyone feel like a little breakfast?" and the coffee will be going and I remember all the mornings as a child when I walked in my socks straight to the telephone before breakfast before anything to place a collect call just to hear his voice— "Kath, how are you Kath?" just to hear the pause.

And I remember

how sometimes the only safe place was on his shoulders, above any home. And nights I couldn't sleep, so tired from walking the bridge back and forth in the dark from mother to father.

This night

I choose to stay awake while shadows of the old trees are taken up as young ones get tall, and the blight nearly over, maple leaves point everywhere, flushed, about to flame out. This night there is no bridge—footless, obsolete. The walls have not shot up.

This late September night in my 22nd year my father and his wife lie sleeping in the other room, my love sleeps here on the floor in his sleeping bag and I see again soon it will be light out.