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A.G. Dumas

The Beautiful White Church on the Hill

Whenever I take the road into town that
goes over the hill and passes by the beautiful
white church I always see its elegant placard sign,
which sometimes reads, "Choir Practice Tonight."

Like a recurring nightmare I envision
a troubled young man, trembling with guilt,
stabbing his choir master with a knife,
first laughing hysterically, then sobbing.

As he watches this demon's blood spurt
and his wide eyes roll back into his head,
the killer believes he has avenged an evil,
although not in the way his god intended.

Was it intended after singing god's praises
in this beautiful place of worship on the hill,
that innocence would be stolen by this demon,
who, some believe, should have been forgiven?

Believers still worship at the church on the hill
and there is, of course, a new choir master.
I wonder what they, in their hearts, now think,
years later, and does it matter what others think?

We all may be reminded their founder once said
neither worship on this mountain nor in Jerusalem,
and I wonder if he, two millennia ago, foresaw that
evil always would lurk in such beautiful places?

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The Quahogger

He watches the August calendar
waiting for the new moon when
the tide is the lowest of the lows;
then, like Christmas to a child,
it finally arrives.

After sliding into smelly old sneaks
he grabs for his rusted rake and
satchel and is ready for the trek;
he steadily slogs out through
the mud flats.

His eyes remain fixed in the distance as
he trudges past skiffs with algae-green
hulls sitting on the soggy muck; he ignores
gulls fighting over stragglers who missed
the outgoing tide.

He trudges on, out to the oases of blackish
eel grass sprouting from the bay's sandy
bottom, now exposed; more than a thousand
waterlogged steps later, wet and muddied,
he is finally there.

He raises his rake, and stabs and claws
in the rivulets created by the receding
water that run through the dark grass;
he digs and pulls and strains until his
shoulders burn.

Victory finally is had when he feels
the scrape of metal on calcium

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carbonate, and heaves a weary sigh;
his prongs lift helpless mollusks out
of their meager hiding.

After cleaning them in a tidal pool, he
holds them in his palm and admires their
shells— painted by gods and etched by devils;
when enough are dug, into the satchel they
go for the trek home.

Back on his deck, with a red sun sinking,
he admires his spoils with a beer and
cigar, and a shucking knife at ready;
alas, he falls off, dreaming of the feast,
giving them reprieve.

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Grandkids

With advancing age comes irrelevance
and less-than-worthy treatment by those
for whom you've loved since they were
in diapers and sacrificed your best years for.

Grandkids fortunately are a different breed
especially when they're young and uncorrupted
and know you only as a bespectacled occasional
playmate and kindly old toe-nibbler.

Their smiles and laughs are as genuine
as '53 Corvettes at a classic auto show
and their hugs and kisses sweeter than
old Aunt Jeanne's refrigerator cakes.

From the moment I say goodbye
until I hug and play with them again
thoughts of them stay with me like
blueberry pancakes smothered with syrup!