

Foster Trecost

Hidden Reminders

Mason sat beside a dying fire, moving only his eyes. He read each line as if for the first time, unable to remember he had read them before, many times. He closed the book and placed it on the hearth, signaling an old hound stand and stretch.

A table in the corner pulled a frown from beneath his gray beard. One side of the table bore remnants of the evening meal, but not the other. On the other side a fork sat atop an old cloth napkin, both tucked close to a plate filled with food. Mason called in the direction of her bedroom: "Not hungry tonight?" The hound cowed at her door and scratched the wood. Mason cleared the table and retired to the second bedroom, which had become his and his alone.

Before the sun, he eased from slumber. A thick fog kept him in bed until it began to clear, which it did, but only in patches. He had planned an early morning chore, but could not recall what it was. He felt sad, but was not sure why. In the hallway the hound whimpered at his wife's door. "Let her sleep," said Mason. "Maybe she'll have breakfast ready when we get home."

From the porch he surveyed fresh snow that had fallen through the night. He grabbed the handles of a push sled empty except for an axe. "We need wood." Mason had remembered his chore and headed for the trees. His hound lead the way.

When wood chops reached his waist, he turned the sled towards home. They entered the clearing and he could see his cabin at the bottom of a gentle slope. The slope made it easier to push the wood filled sled, but as he passed beneath a great oak the sled struck something solid and jarred to stop. A few chops spilled to the ground.

His hound walked to the front of the sled and pawed at the snow. Mason brushed away the remaining flakes, revealing a large stone. A collection of words were etched into the surface. He looked at his cabin, then back at the stone and the words shaped into sentences. He read each one as if for the first time, then remembered he had read them before, many times. His memories lived somewhere else, but hidden all around were reminders of the past. When he stumbled upon one, the pains of yesterday lived like new and then they were gone. He looked back at the cabin and accepted, for the moment, that no one awaited his return, no warm fire, and no breakfast.

He replaced the spilled chops and continued down the slope to the cabin. By the time he got there he knew he was sad, but he was not sure why.