

# Resonances



songs  
and  
stories

# **RESONANCES:**

**COLLECTED**

**SONGS**

**and**

**STORIES**

**by**

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- "A Ballad of Central Florida" was originally released on the CD album, *Songs and Tunes*, 2012.
- "Homosassa Boogie," "Daddy Wiggler," "Black Tide Rising," "Single Red Rose," "Last Chance," "Better Than Before," and "Some Fools Call It Luck" were originally released on the CD album, *Black Tide Rising*, 2010.
- "Cedar Key" is previously unreleased.
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- "Cold Places" and "Mount Desert Turns" are previously unpublished.

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**Interior images:**

- \* *Tsiu* (Mandarin ideogram)
- \* *Saint Jerome in his Study*, Dürer
- \* *Brian Boru's Harp* (19<sup>th</sup> C. drawing)
- \* *Vihuela* (sixteenth century Spain)

**Front cover portrait:**

- \* "*candid*," by Rebecca Pujals-Jones

**Back cover portrait:**

- \* "*sketch*," by Aron Tager

## I.

Not far from Gulf Hammock,  
North of Withlacoochie Bay,  
Stands a tin-roofed cabin,  
Long leaf pines hide it away

Time flows like molasses here,  
Things tend to stay the way they were  
But late at night the moon reveals  
Old stories can come true.

Some folks claim  
He's one of Colonel Dade's men,  
Wandered off in a daze,  
Away from the fight

Others think some  
Damaged soul sought refuge

When the sugar mill blew

Then again remembering

That a child was lost

From Rosewood town,

That fateful night

Hear the sound of rustling near,

Night's secrets are at hand.

Quiet now, feel the power of this

Unblemished haunted land.

My senses tell me something's wrong,

That silhouette's not right,

Animal or man, unsure

Through dim reflected light.

Layin' steel for Yulee's train, his body

twisted, racked with pain,

Or piercing trees for turpentine  
to light the night, his spirit broken down.

Then again remembering  
That a child was lost  
From Rosewood town,  
That fateful night

The past remains here with us  
Worn like clothes against our skin.  
Don't know where we're going.  
All I know is where we've been.

Stories carry memories.  
We may try hard to forget.  
But stalking beasts at midnight,  
we might find our true selves yet.

Some folks claim



He's one of Colonel Dade's men  
Wandered off in a daze,  
Away from the fight

Others think some  
Damaged soul sought refuge  
When the sugar mill blew.

Then again remembering  
That a child was lost  
From Rosewood town,  
That fateful night.

## II.

A dark figure makes his way,  
Into the light of Seventh Avenue,  
Leaves the shadows of old Ybor's  
Cigar factories behind him.

From where the land meets the bay  
Everybody knows his name

Bricks and wrought iron frame the scene.  
Look at his step, he's strollin' heel/toe.  
It's a sort of a strut,  
That night walk of his,  
But I follow along, for a chance  
Just to see Daddy Wiggler dance.

Some boys inside are playin' blues.  
Daddy loves a slow drag,  
So he moves through the door  
With a Grace that draws their attention.  
And they follow along, for a chance  
Just to see Daddy Wiggler dance.

He grabs the tip jar from the stage  
Holds it tight and double spins,

Then invites all the prettiest  
Ones in the place to dig deeply,  
So they follow along, for a chance  
Just to see Daddy Wiggler dance.

The old fedora brim squeezed tight,  
He lifts it up to let his face shine,  
With a smile that says,  
"Love's in this world"  
And we know that he means it.  
So we follow along, for a chance  
Just to see Daddy Wiggler dance.

The grimy tile beneath his shoes  
Is wiped clean by each combination  
Every shuffle and wink of his eyes  
Just draws us all closer.  
From where the land meets the bay  
Everybody knows his name.

A dark figure makes his way,  
Into the light of Seventh Avenue,  
Leaves the shadows of old Ybor City's  
cigar factories behind him.  
We still follow along, for a chance  
Just to see Daddy Wiggler dance.

### III.

Black tide rising  
From a hole in the deep sea bed.  
There's a black tide rising  
From a hole in the deep sea bed.  
Big man stands watching  
Never heard what little brother said.

Drill baby led the chant.  
Now birds no longer fly.

Drill baby led her chant.  
Now birds no longer fly.  
So many stood in silence,  
Didn't think of asking why.

It's a mighty thirst to quench,  
That can drain a deep well dry.  
It's a mighty thirst to quench,  
That can drain a deep well dry.  
Little brother can't complain,  
Has that big log in his eye.

There's a big change coming,  
As we wake up to the news.  
There's a big change coming,  
As we wake up to the news.  
Guess I'll shut down my engine,  
And put on my walking shoes.

There's a black tide rising  
From a hole in the deep sea bed.  
A black tide rising  
From a hole in the deep sea bed.  
Big man stands watching  
Though he heard what little brother said.

#### IV.

The island stretching out its hand  
To greet the waters of the  
Gulf of Mexico,  
Invites me there.  
The empty shore,  
That leads us toward  
The key enfolds the dark,  
Revealing stars at night.  
They guide us there

Like a lighthouse  
Cut against horizon's line.  
Illuminates a path away  
From life defined.

Streets from  
another century  
Parallel the shore  
They lead our steps  
And now we're here  
A town forgotten,  
Now remembered  
Like a holiday today  
Tomorrow, too.

Like a lighthouse  
Cut against horizon's line.  
Illuminates a path away

From life refined.

The strip of sand just off the coast  
Presents another step away  
From *terra firm*.

Let's check it out.

Before we follow our impulses  
Stop and cool ourselves above  
The pilons plunged into the sands.

Like a lighthouse  
Cut against horizon's line.  
Illuminates the path away  
From life unkind.

V.

There's a fire on the river  
And the girls know how to put it out.



Said, there's a fire on the river  
The girls know how to put it out.  
When they learn how to do it,  
The boys are gonna jump and shout.

Floatin' like a leaf,  
Driftin' by a hollow stump.  
Floatin' like a leaf,  
Driftin' by a hollow stump.  
When things get steamy  
They know which way to jump.

All the children boogie,  
Down Homossassa way.  
All the children boogie,  
Down Homossassa way.  
Dip their toes in the river,  
They chill their blues away

Put your arms in the air  
And spin like a sugarmill  
Put your hands in the air  
Spin 'em like a sugarmill  
Baby brother can't do it,  
But I know big sister will.

Like an old bullfrog  
Moanin' in the evening breeze  
Like an old bullfrog  
Moanin' in the evening breeze  
Hear Momma scold Papa,  
All he does is eats, drinks, and leaves.

All the children boogie,  
Down Homossassa way.  
All the children boogie,  
Down Homossassa way.  
Dip their toes in the river,

They chill their blues away.

## VI.

I turned the key in the lock,  
And I pushed the front door gently.

I turned the key in the lock,  
And I pushed the front door gently.

Not a sound came from inside,  
The bedroom door was open wide.

Like a landscape bathed in lightning  
Reveals more than any daylight,  
Like a landscape bathed in lightning  
Reveals more than any daylight,  
So let me tell you what I saw,  
On the day I knew love died.

I found a single red rose,

On a cool white linen sheet.  
I found a single red rose,  
On a cool white linen sheet.  
And just one drop of dew,  
A reminder of a tear.

There are truths I don't deny,  
When they're right in front of my eyes.  
There are truths I don't deny  
When they're right in front of my eyes.  
There was nothing to decide.  
On the day I knew love died.

## VII.

A concrete bed  
Was the likeliest prospect,  
When a cold cutting wind  
Drove me hard to seek shelter.

I came by a door carved  
With a strange dancing figure,  
Just two words written,  
They said, "Last Chance."

It was warm inside,  
And a long stairs descended.  
When I stood at the top,  
My senses tormented me.  
An earthbound scent,  
But an unearthly sound,  
The doorman laughed  
As he guided me down.

The room there was filled  
With a host of humanity,  
With the judgment of children,  
But grown-up insanity.  
Each one searching

For the very same thing.  
Last Chance,  
The place where the animals sing.

My eyes grew dim,  
As a dark truth just dawned on me.  
This place was an outland,  
But it felt like a home to me.  
Facade melts away  
As reality's bared now.  
I take up my stance  
And let out my best howl.

## VIII.

Someone just told me  
Life's wrapped around desire.  
Somebody told me  
Life's wrapped around desire.

Though this moment's cool,  
It won't put out that fire

So just simplify,  
And take life as it comes  
Just simplify,  
And take life as it comes  
Some things just subtract,  
It's not a game of sums.

Easy to please,  
But so hard to satisfy  
Easy to please,  
But hard to satisfy  
Say, "Everything's fine,"  
It's just a little white lie.

You might wonder why  
I've stayed here for a while

You might wonder why  
I've stayed here for a while  
Who needs to rush,  
You know that's not my style.

Ask what I think,  
I'll turn my face away  
You ask what I think,  
I'll turn my face away  
'Cause the deeper the question,  
The more I just might say.

So just simplify,  
And take life as it comes  
Just simplify,  
And take life as it comes  
Some things just subtract,  
It's not a game of sums.



Easy to please,  
But too hard to satisfy  
Easy to please,  
But hard to satisfy  
Say, "Everything's fine,"  
It's just a little white lie.

## IX.

Feel the chains of the past melt away,  
As we fuse every link with new steel  
Old memories tend to work just like this,  
We forget the way that they feel  
It's not good enough,  
Enough to be right.  
It seems to take something more.  
It's not good enough,  
Enough to be right.  
But maybe, just maybe.

It can be better than before.

Down the path that's divided two ways,

The choice, just one or the other.

We should know both lead to the same

Destination as that of our brother.

It's not good enough,

Enough to be right.

It seems to take something more.

It's not good enough,

Enough to be right.

But maybe, just maybe.

It can be better than before.

Angry words, when they're spoken in space,

They take on a life all their own.

Nothing else can be said in their place,

Rippling outward, their impact unknown.

It's not good enough,

Enough to be right.  
It seems to take something more.  
It's not good enough,  
Enough to be right.  
But maybe, just maybe.  
It can be better than before.

## X.

It was desire through the generations  
That put you right here, right now.  
Well, your mother and her granny too,  
They knew just what to do.  
And you know honey,  
some fools call it luck.

It was a car that motor city built  
That brought me right here, right now.  
And a road that I followed, too,

It led me here to you.  
And you know honey,  
some fools call it luck.

Since the days  
When that little cave-boy,  
First put down his bone  
To walk upright  
Towards that little cave-girl,  
Each decision was their own.

A certain look, in your eyes that day,  
Keeps me right here, right now.

I knew I had to find a way  
To get me next to you.  
And you know honey,  
some fools call it luck.

It's all those years of waking up with you  
That brings us right here, right now

'Cause time's not always certainty,  
But I'm still next to you.  
And you know honey,  
some fools call it luck.  
You know honey,  
Some fools call it luck.

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## XI.

His sensualist hands reappear from inside their voluminous sleeves and rub each other gleefully. Soft smoke hanging gently throughout the crowded public room lends an unreal edge to the anonymous wash of attentive faces. The host's daughter clutches the earthen pitcher closer to her young breast and quietly waves off an impatient patron with a quick forefinger to her stern pout.

Li Po relaxes his wrists, resting the tips of his fingers on the edge of the table. His head falls forward, then suddenly rises, the lamp above him illuminating the cherubic expanse of his face into a beacon. His tongue wets

rich lips as he closes his eyes. His voice is monotonic, but his cadence, impassioned.

*"Til there is no reflection of me  
in the wine glass."*

Across the table his challenger reddens and pushes himself away from the contest, eyes glowering towards the nervous murmurs of his entourage. Each can only smile benignly at him, shoulders shifting uncomfortably, but he too, knows in his heart that there is no question that Li Po's poem is the superior one. He bows and turns his glare towards the master, who acknowledges ingenuously, but whose fingers start drumming on the

table, slowly, then faster, and faster. Defeated, the young poet rushes from the room as Li Po explodes into laughter. Gleaming eyes almost disappear into cheeks that grow more enormous with each labored breath.

The mood of the room becomes lighter and Li Po calls the girl by name, gesturing in the direction of his cup. He gasps for air between outbursts, poking his nose deep into the vessel.

"Sueh Tae, I can see no image of myself in here. Only you carry my reflection in those delicate little hands. Ah, ha, hah!"

She smiles and rushes to his side, proffering her pitcher.

"Li Po, that was the most beau-



tiful poem that I have ever heard. I am honored to have been witness to its memorable composition."

Bending, she lifts her apron to wipe some tears from the poet's eyes. He winks lecherously.

"My dear, to experience true and lasting beauty, we must each feel the embrace of our poetic masters. Heh, he..."

As he reaches around the hips of the girl, his laughter convulses into a fit of hacking, soothed only by the blithe smile worn by Sueh Tae. She fills his cup in silence. His eyes, now swimming in proud fulfillment, grin knowledgeably back at him, and he lifts the wine towards his lips so they can taste those of the image on the

flawless surface inside the cup.

Li Po reflects pensively on the impulse that had sent him boating that night, not so many weeks ago, on the still black waters of the disquietly disturbing, but uniquely enchanting lake that lies just outside of this very inn. The moon's eyes were laughing then and he had become so enraptured by the vision mirrored in this perfect plane that he had reached out to embrace it, falling from his tiny sampan.

By some mysterious providence, Sueh Tae, through her bedroom window, had heard the sound of Li Po sputtering offshore and rushed outside into the cold of the dark water. A slight girl, she was still able to pull the

immense bulk of the great poet to shore, grasping him by the girdle that he wore tied around his waist. Li Po's cousin, the renowned calligrapher, Le Ying Pin, had been summoned by her father and had traveled all the way from Honan to care for Li Po in his convalescence.

The two have now situated themselves in the tavern hall, Li Po challenges all local poets to bouts of lyric prowess, Le Ying Pin records the events with quill and paper. Four lines of verse must encompass the breadth of passions within life, just four brush strokes to make a devout philosophical statement and simultaneously paint a vivid portrait of existence. It had become effortless for Li

Po. His words could mirror experience richly and precisely. He had held the glass up to life though for so long, that the distinction had become blurred.

Since Wang Chiang-ling, and more recently, Wang Wei have joined their ancient predecessors, the competition for such events has been scarce. Although Li Po usually rejoices these triumphs out of jaded habit, rather than out of any sincere enthusiasm, he feels exceptionally uplifted this time. This last poem seems to him, complete. While conceiving it, he had felt so at peace, so rejoicing in the fulfillment of his existence, that the lines fell steadily out of him like the last four drops from a deep cask.

He asks Le Ying Pin if he might admire the calligraphy of the poem. It appears beautiful even in script. But then, is not Le Ying Pin the finest calligrapher in all China, and Li Po, of course, the most consummate poet?

The host is talking to someone by the door. Li Po recognizes the eyes on this face. Can it be that they are those of that man who, years ago had stared so intensely at him as he waved a final goodbye to young Meng Hae-jan as the boat debarked for that expedition up the Yellow, from which the young boy never returned?

Were those eyes not there too, in the crowd, before Wang Wei cut himself free from this world to travel

east beyond the scent of the lotus after his final disgraceful loss to Li Po at the table?

Li Po knows that he had seen these eyes somewhere else, somewhere recently. This face reminds him of the moon! He silently chides himself for engaging in such a foolish reverie and revels again in pride of his recent accomplishment. The newcomer however, points to the empty seat across the table from Li Po. The host nods, his eyes wide. He waves Sueh Tae from the room, then guides the man to the chair. As the stranger settles into his seat, Li Po grins and rubs his hands together in anticipation, but suddenly and unexpectedly, the man begins to recite.

His voice is resonant and dark:

*Drinking alone,  
not knowing the coming of Death.*

\*

*I discover my robe  
covered with earth.*

\*

*Drunk, I cannot rise to walk  
along the moonlit creek*

\*

*The wind blows silently  
until the deepest draught is swallowed.*

Li Po peers into his cup, but sees only the illumination of the taper above his head, shimmering silently in the warm wine. The only sound he hears is that of Le Ying Pin's quill as

it clatters noisily against the hard bamboo floor. The host and Le Ying Pin run helplessly to Li Po's side. Both peer anxiously across the table, seeing only the stranger's chair, empty, save for a still pool of water in which swims the reflection of the flame, moonlike beckoning.





## XII.

Johannes stared intently into the meaning behind the Arabic script, the archaic characters barely legible under the sputtering oil lamp. The monastery's librarian was perched on a stool above him, hidden from view by the oaken expanse of his enormous lectern. Johannes knew that if he were to glance upward, all he'd see would be those wizened eyes, magnified by thick, wire-framed lenses, carefully following his hand each time his fingers approached the fragile parchment.

This venerable codex had first arrived in Vienna from Madrid as

a gift from Charles of Spain to his father the Brilliant Maximilian (prior to Charles's becoming glorious Emperor himself). Its value unrecognized, it soon found its way to this retreat close to the fringes of the Great Empire on the banks of the Danube.

Charles's ignorance concerning the true value of this tome's intellectual content was exceeded only by Maximilian's. Admittedly, it was a beautiful volume and at the time, it must certainly have seemed a gracious, albeit guileless gift. Ornate moorish carvings were etched into the tarnished gold that embossed the dark red cedar of the worm-holed cover. Its fragile

goatskin pages were still bound into place by leather lacings which exhibited an advanced state of deterioration.

It was well documented how King Ferdinand himself had unearthed this text beneath the shadows of the blood-spattered minarets of Malaga. Lost and almost totally forgotten, it had been secreted in a hidden cache, carefully protected from the harsh Iberian sun (or worse from the unpure hands of the impious Christian). Ferdinand's own journal poignantly describes the reverential awe with which he had first beheld the text, discovering it in that moment of his greatest triumph amid the remains of human

carrion surrounding its resting place.

Johannes had heard stories of this book since his boyhood. He remembered how the eyes of the village priest, at whose feet he had dutifully recited Herodotus, would glisten mischievously as he'd hint in oblique euphemisms of a mysterious book in which great truths were realized. After years of travel and research, he came to discover that the book still existed, that it could only be the same volume mentioned by Paul in his letters from Ephesus and most certainly must be the text intimated by Rabelais in his *Livre Incomparable* which he describes as containing, "Le savoir rassemblé de la race

avant le tombeau. Ce que nous avons sus, mais ne savons plus." Johannes was beside himself with excitement when he suspected that the book was still in Europe, that it was here, in Hungary. He vowed to himself that its secret must be disclosed.

It was obvious that the anonymous Mohammedan scrivener who'd laboriously penned this copy had worked directly from original texts, ancient documents long lost and even in that day, certainly unremembered. The care with which it had been duplicated was evident to Johannes, his admiration spanning the centuries between these analogous efforts. The stylus

strokes on these pages were not of the kind in use by the turn-of-the-millennium Saracens. They must certainly be characters dating from an earlier, eldrich period. They were in use before Selim, before Abu Bekr, perhaps even before any of the great prophets themselves. The translation into Latin was, as a result, a most challenging one. Johannes had assumed correctly that his base Germanic tongue could never embody these lofty contents. Even Latin, the mother of languages could hardly expand to describe the concepts described in this exceptional work.

The earlier passages, already translated and copied, had proved

decidedly less demanding. Here were named the generations of the earliest wave of warrior tribesmen to occupy the fertile Euphrates city-states from their homeland in the high crags of the stark Caucasus. Here were the verses that were intoned by these first Aryans as they swept westward armed with and inspired by these selfsame revelations. This confidence of faith and innocent barbarism empowered them to eliminate any obstacle to their predestined earthly kingdom. Johannes smiled thoughtfully as he set his quill to the page and so preserved these words in Latinate phrases. The Germanic peoples were the rightful heirs to this lost race.

His would be the generation that would finally regain the knowledge of their forefathers, a heritage denied them for centuries and he, Johannes Strachmier, would be the visionary, the conduit through which this legacy would flow.

Johannes looked up to catch the librarian's vigilant eyes, then gently motioned toward the book. The monk climbed nimbly down from his stool, his cleric's robe disappearing for a moment behind the oaken expanse of the pulpit. Johannes leaned back in his chair, away from the stark wooden table as the librarian reappeared and stood next to him, deliberately clothing his hands in white leather



gloves. He delicately grasped the top sheet between thumb and forefinger, turned to the next page of the manuscript, then silently returned to his station.

Scanning the contents of the page, Johannes contemplated the meaning of the thoughts resonating in these first symbols. They were brimming with the poignant sadness of inevitable destiny. "Such is the price of self knowledge," he reflected. As he continued, though, he found himself nearly weeping in anticipation and awe at the profound truths which that moment should be finally revealed to him.

Suddenly, outside the panels of the library there arose the rau-

cous sounds of men shouting in terror. A shattering crunch of smashing wood signaled that the thick gates to the compound had given way. The librarian leapt down from his stool and frantically rushed to fling open the carved doors of the library, his course robes fluttering in panic. The outer hall was filled with smoke and the crackling sound of flames intermingled with the horrified cries of dying victims.

Suliman the Magnificent's invasion army had arrived unexpectedly from the East. The abbey was lost to Christendom that very hour. The Ottomans had traveled quickly, and with them was bran-

dished the flame which retreats to  
leave only lifeless remains, charred  
debris, and a legacy silenced.



### XIII.

This, as every morning just before dawn, the children sit and wait for him. Wind rushing up the hill from the cool ocean below rises skyward. It lifts black sheaves of hair away from nut-brown faces to reveal dark eyes peering in intense anticipation down the path. In the distance they see Paolo's arrival, the battered wood of his old guitar bouncing against the bare skin of his tanned back, supported by only a frayed length of twine.

Albertido whispers to Carmela, "Oh, dios mio! He's made it here just in time. If he doesn't play his guitarre soon, the night might not end and

the sun will not come out today.”

Carmela’s brown eyes widen with care. “What would happen if one day, he couldn’t come?”

“Well, the night just may decide to stay and never let the sun rise again.” Carmela calls urgently down the hill,

“Hurry up, Paolo. Please hurry!”  
As Paolo ambles silently up the rocky trail, little Martina runs downhill to greet him. He caresses her hair while her tiny double steps struggle to match his gait, then gently cups the back of her head in his hand and they climb over the crest of the hill together.

The children reverently step away from the edge of the cliff as

Paolo swings the guitar from his back, then casually brushes the dirt from the stone outcropping that is his favorite seat. He turns his chiseled features toward the horizon, squinting darkly in the direction of the vague glow in the distance. He then looks around him, smiling beneficently at the concern on the tiny faces surrounding him.

His thumb rests on the thickest string of his guitar and he strums downward across each of the strings, exciting them into a living, vibrant chord. Each of the youngsters' eyes are staring at the spot where the ocean meets the sky and as one, they exhale a sigh of relief when a tiny sliver of light peeks tentatively into

view. Paolo's fingers take this as their cue to leap into action and move deliberately across the fretboard, generating a deliriously infectious dance rhythm, his morning Fandaguillo.

Carmela grabs both of Martina's hands and swings her around joyfully. They break away from each other to dance solo, tiny hips shimmying in mock emulation of what they've seen the older girls do. The boys too, move their feet in the dirt madly, as swiftly as they can. Paolo subtly lifts the tempo of his festive morning dance until the bottom of the sun has parted from the horizon, then he stops suddenly, letting both arms drop quietly to his sides. He rises with a wink toward Martina and shuffles down the

hill to the village, followed by furtive whispers behind tiny cupped hands.

This, as every night just before dusk, Paolo plays for the tourists on the lanai of the cantina. The senioritas never would dream of dancing with the same recklessness as young Alberto and his friends, but they've learned to exhibit a different type of abandon. From the moment Paolo picks up his guitar, their movement starts, maybe just in the hips, perhaps simply a foot, but at least a part of everyone's anatomy is in synchronization with Paolo's rhythms. Everyone that is, but the strange man from Ciudad Negre, who has been sitting in front of Paolo all evening. He doesn't move at all. He just leans back,



sweating under his broad white hat, enshrouding himself in a haze of liquory sweet cigar smoke. The woman at his table however, can't stop writhing. She steals behind the cloud of smoke, arms outstretched, shifting her shoulders against her hips. An open bottle of rum mysteriously appears on the table at Paolo's side.

The man from Ciudad Negre winks mischievously at Paolo, who puts his guitar down to pour a tall glass of the dark rum. He drapes Paolo with flowery compliments, then rambles incoherently about money and fame and about what great influence he has on the people in the city. Paolo's pride in his own talent flushes as each draught of this flattery blends

with the heat of the sweet rum. Whenever he plays, he sees the proof of his own influence in every movement of the crowd before him. His music is now silenced though and he notices that the street before the cantina has emptied. The tourists have moved on for the night.

Turning his attentions back to his guitar, he picks it up and launches into his fiercest rhythm and as he lets a rich chord ring out, he hears from under the white hat,

“Play a Fandaguillo.” Paolo graciously gestures, “No.”

“Play a Fandaguillo!” Paolo mimes the action of the samba drum.

“Bianca here, does not want a Samba. She wants to dance to the

Fandaguillo." His cigar tilts upward to flash a boozy grin toward the woman standing behind him. But Paolo begins the samba, a beautiful, soulful samba and Bianca starts to sway, involuntarily. She runs her hands down the shoulders of the man from Ciudad Negre, then she delicately brushes her fingertips across his face, closing his eyes seductively. Still moving, she turns to watch Paolo and stares intently into his face.

When the song finishes, her eyes remain locked upon the musician. There is a snort from under the white hat as the man rises abruptly to his feet, turns unsteadily, then staggers blindly down the calle into the darkness of the evening, leaving Paolo and

Bianca alone in the fragrantly scented night air. Bianca dances toward him, gently brushing her hips against Paolo's arms. She whispers,

“Play a Fandaguillo for me.” He shakes his head.

“Please?” He nods silently, hooks his thumb familiarly against the lowest string, then draws down, raucously. He breaks resolutely into the morning Fandaguillo, the one that he has always played only for the children.

Bianca seems to shed her inhibitions at the sound. She shoots her arms upward into the air, arches her spine, and writhes enticingly, staring at him all the while. Out of the corner of his eye for the briefest of moments, Paolo sees the landscape of the

village illuminated brightly before him, as if he were witnessing the flash of an instance of dawn. Bianca spins on her heels and falls laughing towards Paolo, who catches her and holds her tightly. He leans his guitar against the wall of the porch.

Next morning, as always, the children wait patiently for Paolo, but he never arrives. With confidence, Alfredo assures the other children that he will make it, but as their eyes scan the length of the path, they see nothing. The children turn eastward to stand in humiliated silence as the sun bursts forth, fully unaided from its resting place. It rises defiantly into the sky, making a mockery of their innocent belief.

“Paolo has lied.”, Martina weeps.

“I hate him”, is all Alfredito replies, his lips pursed tightly. Carmela whispers quietly that Paolo had never said a single word to them, ever.

Paolo awakens cradled in the soft pillow of Bianca’s arms, the harsh sting of the rum chiding him each time he inhales. He bolts upright in the brightly lit bedroom and tenderly caresses the sleeping señorita’s hair. Then he resolutely leaps from her side and rushes out of the cottage to the cantina, where he is relieved to find his guitar leaning against the windowsill where he left it.

Dashing up the mountain, he arrives in time to find the children, still weeping. Alfredito angrily grabs a

stone and strikes a threatening stance against Paolo, but turns away sadly and drops the stone, shoulders drooping. Paolo gently brushes off his rock, sits down, and slowly begins to play them a new song, a contrite Zarabanda.

The children wipe the backs of their hands against their faces and close their eyes tightly, then slowly tighter as the moon slips stealthily over the sun plunging the landscape and all of its inhabitants into what seems like a brief moment of abject darkness.







## XIV.

There was no way that young Turlough O'Carolan could ever have seen the tears that stained the moist eyes that Mrs. MacDermott-Roe buried in her richly scented handkerchief. Her parting sigh contained a little whimper at the end, a cry. In this he recognized the sincere depths of her sorrow. It echoed in his mind, mixing with the sound of the rain that fell over the heath before the MacDermott-Roe mansion.

Leaning his head back and out from the shelter of the eaves, he let the water wash over his face, filling the useless sockets of

his darkened eyes, spilling out past his ears and mouth to the ground below.

In the sound of the retreating steps, he sensed that Patrick's back was turned to fetch the mule that would carry him away from Mrs. MacDermott-Roe, who took this opportunity to furtively and passionately embrace Turlough good-bye.

Taking the chance that Patrick's blind side was turned, she reached down and ran her hand up the inside of her protege's thigh. From the abrupt end to her caress, O'Carolan knew that his man had turned back towards them.

Turlough was vaulted onto

the beast after feeling for Patrick's interlocked fingers. Mrs. MacDermott-Roe stood silently in the rain as Patrick tugged at the rope tied to the muzzle of the ass and pulled it towards the wagon rut that constituted a road.

The rut was as deep as the mud would allow and they trudged so for hours. Turlough's harp, carefully tied to the rump of the ass hummed in ethereal dischord inside its canvas sack whenever the ass stumbled.

"Christ's blood, Patrick. Ye've wakened me from such a fine reverie. I dinno if I'll ever be back in the place from where ye've taken me, so I must be findin' such in

dreams. Our mistress was so generous to myself these years past and I do so appreciate her giving me yourself to be accompanyin' me on this, our journey. Y'er old master at the MacDermott-Roe mansion, I daresay, knew full well that it was time that I, now in complete manhood, should be takin' leave, but there's much there I'll be missin', most highly the mistress of the house."

Patrick responded with his customary silence, so Turlough clucked a little tune to himself with the rhythm of the hooves splashing into, then sucking their way out of the rich Kerry mud. He reached over the mule's side

and deftly untied his great jug of pure, then lifted it gently to his lips. One prodigious swallow, and the jug was ruefully emptied. O'Carolan cradled the jar elegantly in his arms and shouted to Patrick.

"My boy, we've got ourselves a bit of an emergency. We'll be wantin' to be restin' at the next publican."

Patrick nodded silently, and trudged on; his cargo humming to himself on the back of that faithful ass.

Turlough lurched through the smell of bad ale and old sweat upon his arrival. The sour atmosphere and the clamor of belligerent voices excited his thirst in anticipa-

tion. Patrick was still outside with the mule, gathering the necessaries, but the youth, too impatient to wait, shoved his way through the room, leading always with one foot probing forward to kick any obstacle out of the way that might fall under his step.

When he heard the distinctive resonance of the bar against his boot leather, he grabbed the oak with both hands craning his head forward, almost striking the innkeeper in the pate with his face.

"Y'er sweetest Irish whiskey, me fine sirruh, and I'll be havin' a bit of it this night, thank you very much."

Turlough pulled his harp out

of its canvas bag and felt across the warm fieldstone by the hearth for a suitable seat. He settled the instrument in his lap and plucked a chord loudly. His arms flew out to either side, then over his head where he held them upraised until the sound of the chord had died away.

All eyes were upon him. He grinned so hard that his gums showed over the white of his teeth. His supple fingers flew into a fast jig. From his cold, dark corner of the room, Patrick recognized the melody as the one that he had heard humming behind him, during those last few miles before reaching the inn. But instead of hearing it

at the leisurely clip, clop, clip of the mule, the tempo was that of a mad dance.

Every string seemed to gleam at once, redirecting the firelight around the room. Two elderly sailors, Brits from Liverpool one would guess from their attire, got up and squared off towards each other. One arm lifted, the other akimbo, they each seemed to be attempting to lift one knee, then the other, as high as possible.

The sound of their boots against the floorboards provoked Turlough to increase his speed as they danced. These sailors had been well exercised by a thorough ship's fiddler for they had the kind



of stamina that comes only from pounding decks from Bristol to Bombay and back. Every hand in the room clapped the time to egg these salts on.

They kept this perverse pace up until Turlough made his final flourish and let the sound of the harp echo into silence by its own accord. The locals erupted into laughter and shouts as these ancient tars led Turlough to their table with shouts of gratitude where they regaled him with deep jars of stout.

"Ye trod well, fer British bastards."

"Dinno if that's a compliment er not, comin' from a blind papist

such as y'erself, but music of y'er land tears years away from this battered body."

"Yer heathen brew bests the holiest water from the font of St. Peter, that's all I'm knowin' ...But what's this then, is there somethin' on the floor beside yer boots that's movin'?"

"Harper, y'er ears know music well, but without y'er eyes, ye'd best not be dependin' on 'em fer all ye ken. 'Twas now't."

"It's me ears I'm not doubtin'. Methinks I'm hearin' some gigglin' down there, too."

"'Twas now't, harper!" The other sailor, silent until then spoke up with nervous urgency, blurting,

"We'd best be gettin' hence, mate."

"Aye, 'tis true, harper, there's great pleasure in y'er fingers, but don't be lettin' y'er curiosity get the better of ye. We'll take our leave now."

With this the two abruptly left O'Carolan sitting alone at the great oaken table. He beckoned to Patrick.

"I'll be wantin' to know what them two are carryin' in tha' sack. You go. The beast will follow the highway. 'Twill carry me to where we shall meet later up the road."

Patrick brutishly followed the sailors out the door. Stealth was

not one of the skills that Providence had bestowed upon him, but before too long, the two had their backs to the highway and their hands occupied. The very ale that had dimmed their senses had given Patrick the opportunity to find the sack untended and unwatched.

He made his move quietly and grabbed it. There was a kick from inside, as if a small dog was attempting to break loose. Startled, Patrick dropped it squelching a yell, but picked it back up and quickly ran off, unnoticed.

A full moon illuminated the Irish countryside, but Turlough was blissfully unaware of the stark beauty it revealed, concerning him-

self only with the approaching sound of pounding brogans on the sod and Patrick's loud pants for air.

"Patrick, excellent fellow, I know from yer gait, ye've met with success." His man just nodded uselessly as he handed over the sack, then rested, standing with his hands on his knees, catching deep breaths in loud sucking noises. O'Carolan felt around the perimeter of the sturdily wound leather cord for a knot and deftly untied it.

Suddenly, without warning, a tiny hand wearing a large gold ring reached out of the bag and tweaked Turlough's nose. The harpist shouted, falling off the mule, tumbling gracelessly to the

ground. A diminutive man struggled out of the bag and stood defiantly above the prostrate O'Carolan. Patrick straightened himself up, attaining meager dignity, but only stared mutely dumbfounded.

The small man was entirely hairy. His beard climbed up his cheeks to his eyes and down his forehead to his brow. He was stout, like a keg, and spoke to them in an archaic Gaelic.

*"Can you heathens comprehend the true mother tongue?"*  
Turlough nodded.

*"You play well, harper. Only once before have I enjoyed better. Would you be wanting to know where it is that I've heard it?"*

Once again, Turlough nodded.

*"Come with me, you giant freak. You've released me from my captivity by those relic barnacles (barbarians, both) so I guess I must be giving you a reward for such. Come, there is a special place I know of, quite near to here."*

Patrick remained motionless by the road, but Turlough stumbled behind the sound of the little man, whose voice kept chattering incessantly, leading him tripping deeper and deeper into the forest night.

*"Here we are, harper. Can you feel how special this place be? It is shielded from all undeserving eyes... I have here in this flask,*

*some pachise. We can partake of it for you must thirst. The potato was never the noble of fruits, but its essence is quite potable. Whoa! Careful, don't be drinking it too quickly now. It's made better men than you, go blind. Ah, what do I say. I'd guess you must have had your fill of this then, boy."*

*"These eyes have never seen the teat that suckled me, never mind the tilting of the cup, me strange little man."*

*"Well, never mind that. I told you before, I had heard divine harping ere I met you. I know you're not seeing it, but you can feel that it's here, can't you. This is that harp. It belonged to the*



*greatest warrior-musician since the likes of David. This harp was last caressed by the hands of the great Brian Boru."*

O'Carolan took a strong pull off the vial of pachise and plodded deliberately, intuitively towards the harp. The little man protested uselessly. His words fell upon Turlough's ears, now as deaf to any voice as his eyes were blind to the world. He gently picked up the exquisite harp and cradled it on his lap, then played it with a feeling of such sublime exuberance that his hands seemed to become disembodied.

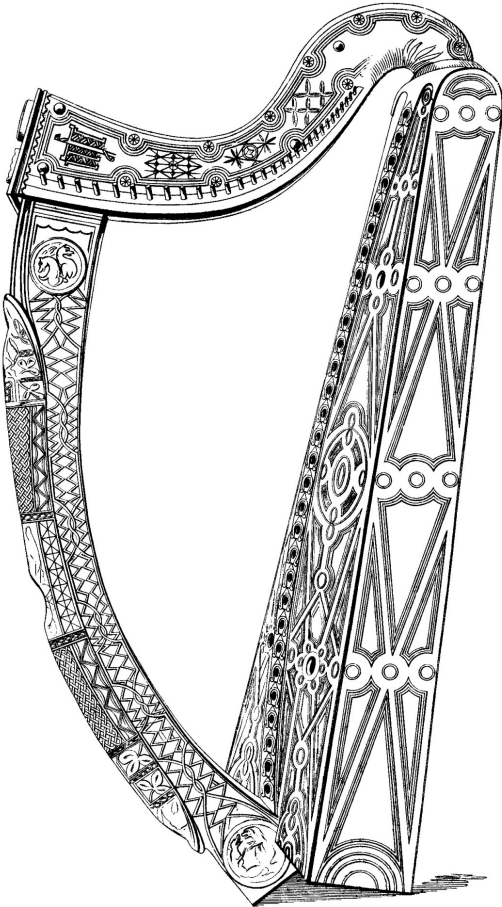
This was surely to be the instrument of his highest expression.

Each pluck of the string would set resonances in motion that would echo into the deepest pictish cave, into the basest hovel, into the most aristocratic mansion. Turlough watched the music he created. It moved in shapes and lines and colors.

He looked upon the beatific face of the Great Brian and knew that he, himself spoke with the voice of his ancestors before him and the generations yet unborn. The Great Brian Boru smiled upon him as his heartbeat raced, keeping pace with the sound of the harp until he collapsed into ecstatic exhaustion, his dark eyes resplendent with visions of sound...

He awakened to find his hands emptied. The harp and the little man were gone. His fingers combed the contours of the grotto, but could find nothing save lichen-ened stone. He realized only then, that he would never again feel the warmth of Mrs. MacDermott-Roe's touch and he cried impotently for his man, Patrick to come and get him. He must continue his travels.

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## XV.

We lived right at the foot of Burnham Mountain. My dad owned sixty acres up the side of it, and there was this pond way up in its farthest reaches. You've heard of those kind of mountain ponds. They're called tarns, but to us it was simply "the frog pond." It was the only place that had anything alive in it for thousands of feet around. Above the tree line, you understand, there was nothing but scrub brush and drab granite for as far as you could see.

The pond though, always seemed to buzz with activity, even in the dead of winter. You could wipe the snow off of the ice with your

hand to peer clearly into the water and you'd see these little critters moving around down there. Our parents wouldn't believe us when we'd explain that this place kept active all winter. They never seemed to be curious enough to climb up and check out our story anyway.

We knew that this was a cold place of a special kind. It seemed natural to us. It had always been that way. Through-out my childhood, I spent almost all of my free time up there. Every summer, we'd take short swims in its breathtakingly frigid water. When winter arrived, we'd bundle up and trek up there to skate on its surface, to just slide around on its smoothness, and just be there. We'd

stay out all day until darkness fell, when we'd hear the faint jingling of the dinner bell and the distant sound of Mom's voice echoing up to us from way down the mountain.

My friend, Stevie Seitz and I must have been around twelve or thirteen when it happened. Stevie was one of those kids that everybody has pegged early. You know him, thick black horn-rimmed glasses, big and physically gawky (even at thirteen). He lived right next door and it seemed to me then, that he could be convinced to do anything I wanted to do, so of course, we became fast friends. This day though, it was almost spring. The snow had already melted once, but the day before, an

arctic front had arrived and the temperature plummeted.

After school, I told Stevie to come with me up to the frog-pond and we'd see how things were doing up there. I knew that we'd find something underneath the ice to keep us entertained. It was always a strenuous climb, but this day, with sleet spattering in our faces, sheeting into ice on our foreheads, and the frigid wind slicing at our ears, it was more difficult than usual. It had become late afternoon and though the sun hadn't been seen all day, the clouds above us seemed to keep getting darker and darker.

When we arrived at the pond, the ice didn't have that thick hard



sheen that we'd become familiar with during the depths of winter. The surface was covered with a thin blanket of dirty slush. Of course, I decided we should try to see how much weight this ice could hold. Both of us ventured towards the middle of the pond. The surface creaked and crunched, but we advanced undeterred. We almost made it to the middle, when suddenly, the ice gave way.

Stevie went down first. All support beneath his feet just disappeared and he fell straight in. I retreated to try and find myself more solid standing, but I knew that Stevie was really helpless in the water. He couldn't negotiate the pond in the summer, much less now that it's near

zero.

Gasping for breath, he struggled, knocking his glasses off his face and into the deepest part of the water. I got down on my hands and knees to crawl forward, and was barely able to reach his flailing hand.

The ice supporting me cracked noisily and I started to slide into the water. Scrambling back, I loosened my grip. My footing just disappeared and the water rushed over the surface of the chunk of ice on which I was kneeling as it slipped deeper and deeper underwater. I grabbed the hood of Stevie's parka and pulled. He was entirely underwater by this time. The depth of the pond was only eight or nine feet at the center, but it was

definitely deep enough to swallow the both of us. I was treading water up to my neck and struggling with the inanimate weight attached to the hood I had clutched in my hand.

Every chunk of ice I would grab onto or try to scramble on top of, would break away and disappear into the dark water. The tight grasp I had on Stevie's hood all of this time, was done less out of conscious heroics, more from simple instinct.

Finally, rather than continuing my attempts to crawl back on top of the ice, I cracked a channel through its brittle surface and was able to trudge to shore, crunching a path through the remaining ice, dragging Stevie behind me all the way.

Through my gloves, my fingers were screaming in pain as I tugged him out. My clothes and parka were so soaked with the crystalizing pond-water, that the weight kept dragging me downward as if I were being pulled back into the depths, but I heaved and yanked that big awkward body to shore, towing him up on the rocks.

His eyes were wide open, but he wasn't moving. A sharp slap on the side of his face drew no reaction at all. I sat him upright on the rocks then turned around to take off my soaking gloves and try to rub some life back into my own fingers. I heard something behind me and when I turned back to look for him, Stevie

was back in the water!

He was plodding mechanically towards the middle of the pond. I yelled, but he didn't even blink. He just kept walking. Racing back into the water, I grabbed him by the coat and dragged him with me back to shore. Now remember, he was a big oafish kid and his wet, dead weight was starting to tire me out, plus by this time, it had gotten quite dark.

I pulled him out by his arm and laid him back down. Once again, he was not moving, not responding to anything at all. His eyes were open, but they were sort of glazed, as if they had iced over.

I was getting pretty scared by this point because I'd never seen Ste-

vie so quiet for this long in his entire life. He even mumbled in his sleep. I knew something was really wrong. I could feel the knives of cold stabbing into my feet and my ears were ringing in agony from the pain. Then I decided to rummage through the scrub to get some branches to cover him from the elements so I could run and get some help. I slogged over the rocks to grab the best of the scrawny fir boughs that I could find, but returned to find nothing but a pool of sheeting pond water where I had left Stevie. He was waist deep in the water again!

I ditched the branches and ran one more time into the pond to grab him. This time, I got him by the

hood really good and didn't let go. I pulled him to shore. Holding tight, I dragged him to the path then down the mountain, bouncing behind me over rocks and roots all the way back to my house.

The sleet and snow were coming down more steadily, giving Stevie's face an eerie unreal sheen. It glowed expressionless in the early moonlight and I vividly remember thinking how strange he looked without his glasses.

When I got home, I let go of the hood, leaving him lying on the porch and went into the house so I could get some help to bring him inside. When my dad and I stepped out, there was nothing there: only this

damp spot, freezing quickly on the wood where I had left him.

I failed miserably in my feeble attempts to explain the details of what had happened, but Dad decided that we should climb the mountain again and try to find him. We followed the cold, wet trail to where I knew we'd discover him and there he was, over his head, bubbling in the middle of the icy pond.

I didn't want to go near that water again, but when Dad waded in after him I followed reluctantly. We both pulled Stevie to shore. Dad pressed two fingers up against his neck and said quietly that Stevie was dead.

We carried him back down the mountain and delivered him directly



to his parent's house. The Seitzes were really upset, so I tried to explain what had really happened, but all the adults in the room shushed me, except Stevie's mom, who just kept blubbering loudly, and hugged me up against her. I shut up about it right then. I really didn't have the heart to tell her anything more.

They had arranged a beautiful funeral for Stevie at the Burnham-Young Funeral Home a couple of days afterward. At the last minute, though, the body mysteriously disappeared. Every-one in town was totally shocked by this. It wasn't such a surprise to me, though. I stopped going back up to the pond after that. I knew what had really

happened and I began staying inside when the afternoons became cool.

One day, in the winter of my last year at high school, I climbed up to the frog pond on a bright, sunny, crystalline cold February afternoon, just to visit it one last time, and perhaps put my childhood fears to rest. The thick, clear surface of the ice was dusted with a delicate, new snow.

I walked out to the middle of the pond, knelt down, and brushed off a clean spot. Peering through the ice, I saw a pair of horn rims perched on that familiar baby face staring blithely back at me and it was smiling!

I ran screaming down the mountain and haven't returned to this day. Now I shiver involuntarily

whenever I feel a cold draft, and these memories rush in to remind me that there are special things that sometimes happen in cold places.

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## XVI.

We children cried,  
"Grand-mere, come quickly."  
"See the sunset."  
Leaning on her cane  
In the doorway,  
She croaked bitterly,  
"The sun is not setting,  
The earth is turning."  
Her eyes grew vermillion  
And we all became silent  
As Mount Desert swallowed  
The light.

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