

BY BARBARA ATWOOD

KAYAKING THE INSIDE PASSAGE, BRITISH COLUMBIA

At first I thought it was a child crying,
that high-pitched beseeching wail insistent
above the crackle of shells and stones,

but then I saw the doe and the wolf
on the island shore
just beyond the cedar forest,

their seamless silhouettes merging and parting
in a strangely beautiful ballet,
the wolf pressing the doe to the edge of the sea.

I paddled closer just as the doe knelt down
on her forelegs in the churning white foam,
eyes blank with fear,

bleating for something to somehow
shield her from the looming thing,
the dark fury at her rear.

When the wolf's mouth closed on the doe's flank
I half expected her to scream,
but she made no sound at all, crumpling instead

into the surging tide, first her legs,
her trunk, then her lovely head.,
those soft eyes straining against the end.

In the quiet that followed,
the doe's blood sparkled in the thick sea air
as if a mad artist had tossed her pallet to the wind.

WINNER



poetry

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scr apbook , cir ca 1930

It falls open to the page
where the grainy image of my father
is pasted in at an odd angle.

He leans against an iron gate beneath a mulberry
tree,
one leg slightly bent,
right hand thrust in a pocket.

The flannel shirt and work pants
hang loosely on his frame,

but you can tell he's muscled
and lean.

His hair is the color of straw,
his pale eyes are fixed on the
woman
behind the camera.

There's no sadness yet in his
face,
only a longing gaze that seems
to plead
for her attention.

A thin line of smoke rises
from the cigarette in his mouth,
a white spiral above his head.

He is seductive, not quite
smiling,
that handsome young man at the
gate,
staring at her, at me,

his unabashed desire
burning through the chasm of
time
like a fire in a distant field.

At the moment of the
photograph
tragedy is only a word.
The tree holds onto its dark
fruit,

the quivering branches are still.
At that perfect moment when
their story begins,
he and my mother are to live
forever.