

News That Stays News

by Charles Huschle

It's a caffeine-fueled pep talk he tries to give her Monday morning, jittery: bouncing around the kitchen on espresso, eager to get to his writing but desperate to tell his daughter exactly what he thinks about her ex-husband without coming on too strong - thinking 'I need to express equanimity' and let my fear, hatred and delusion pass through me: 'Anger is like a hot coal held in one's own hand that injures the carrier.' And, 'When the pimp's in the crib, ma, drop it like it's hot,' he mutters. He's channeling his rap vipassana teacher and suddenly stricken that he's violated the precept of taking intoxicants — the coffee this morning to counter the beer last night, not to mention the weed he'd smoked over the weekend in the hot tub with the divorcee from the W4M ad who'd gone on to give him the best blowjob of his life. It's a wonder he'd slept at all. To the toaster, the fridge, back to the sink, the kettle, a sip of coffee, a glance at the newspaper ("stocks showed little impetus to recover from last week's losses as Herman Cain tried to get sexual favors in exchange for his help finding a new job for a woman who had recently lost her post") — always a source of inspiration for new poems — Ezra Pound: "Poetry is news that stays news," and so on, et cetera; and 'My son-in-law's a son-of-a-bitch.' Breathe.

She's pulling on her socks, sitting on the floor of the mud-room, tears streaming down her face while she avoids looking at her father - who's breathless about something too - but still she smiles at Bozo the yellow lab that's bouncing up and down (and sideways) and whacking her with the wag of his forearm-thick tail; the dog's not a coffee drinker but he's acting like one. He'd slept beside her all night long and woke her by licking her foot; I'm sure my father put him up to it, she thought. Her father is hovering the way fathers do; she imagines he has the words inside him and only once she's out in the garden with the dog will he be able to say something and then probably only on paper. He'll hand her a letter when she gets back from the walk, she thinks, or one of his poems; and while it'll be

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perfect, his brand of compassion and art mixed into one, it won't relate to what she's feeling right now. Some trick of the morning light makes the tattoo on her ankle look like the burn from a branding iron. She had watched her father as he slept last night. He was handsome and innocent, like a baby boy. Yesterday she had been to see his doctor and to hear the results of the tests and she had not been able to tell him what she had heard, and besides, he was absorbed in thinking about her asshole of an ex-husband.

Then her father kneels beside her and she feels his hot coffee breath and his hand on her shoulder. "I know I'm getting fruitier by the year, but a father will always want to protect his daughter, you know," he says. "I'll make you some jello while you're out."

