One Week At A Very Quiet Camp

by John Riley

September, 2010

Poetry is a way to stop talking
I decided while standing on top
of Ampersand Mountain. I still
believed this after coming down
from the mountain, but kept
it to myself. I was with friends
who care nothing about poetry.
Our warm rooms were cluttered
with watercolors of hunting dogs,
lacquered fish mounted on plaques,
intricate antique models of sailboats,
and framed charts of old soundings.
The lake, full and stable and dull black
like slightly burned charcoal, waited
patiently beneath a thick mist
the night we set up a telescope
on the boat dock and sighted Saturn
with four of its moons lined up
in the clear sky. I spent an evening
reading *Skylark*, a little book about
a man and wife with a hopelessly
homely daughter who are shattered
to discover how much more
enjoyable their lives become
when the girl goes away for a week.
It's set in a fictional provincial town
in Hungary before the Great War. One

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of the peripheral characters is a poet
who dreams of moving to Budapest,
but we know he will never leave home.
The paneling in the lodge was the color
of congealed blood and during the day
the mountains in the Seward Range
shaped a shifting blend of shadows,
and were still quite green although
the leaves had begun to turn.