

On the Deeper Slants of the Universe

by Sam Rasnake

Ten moments:

The ocean air has a wonderful sting to it. That must be the salt. Very dream-like. Breathing in through the nose — the sound of waves as soundtrack— only enhances the swell of the lungs. It's a flash a person can taste — as well as smell and feel. Marvelous.

A cup of French roast coffee before dawn is amazing — earthy and dark — the morning silent, and the home Mary and I have made understands itself as all possibilities rolled into the one day that's just beginning — and you wish it would never end.

In winter, a wave of Hickory burning in a fireplace is incredible — smoke hovering in the dusk as the stars come out and begin to wake the night. The air crisp, the sound of my footfall in snow, my breath moving ahead of me like a shadow I walk through. Then, coming inside, soup simmering. That's a perfect time.

The closet's cedar chest — with its dark forest smell — held all my toys. Opening the lid was walking into another world.

The basement at Grandma Smith's house, all cool and dank, is a whiff of childhood, a thousand memories I would relive if I could.

Clams sautéing on the stove, center cut bacon browning in a pan, a cake in the oven. And time slows. Everything makes sense.

In late spring, early summer, a morning forest — all wet and heavy — as the mist refuses to let go of the path. The deep scent of moss

and pine, rhododendron and stone.

Remembering a stick of sandalwood in the burner at Twin Oaks — the life ahead, a wonderful question mark — and that point in time, the only impossible dream to hold, to wrap the body in, to sleep. Then, the scents of Inis, Trésor, and Shalimar from Mary's perfume tray to her neck and shoulders span the years.

During the holidays from mid-November through the new year, our kitchen is alive — the house, an encyclopedia of aromas — cinnamon to pine to carrot soufflé, steaks in the cast iron skillet, ham baking, cider steaming, pumpkin pie cooling, butter cream icing for the cake — taking it all in, taking it all —

Tuscany soup, layered in its own ability to create itself, no water added, reminds me of the garden at home when I was ten. Everything fresh. Herb stew, my favorite dish Mary makes, its spices a halo of goodness over the table. Mine? Boatman stew with fresh grouper — tomatoes, onions, mushrooms, and thyme in the broth. Or, the richness of Hungarian goulash, smoked paprika in the large pot on the stove, heat rising into the room — the smell and taste of the old world — a world of dreams, maybe.

“The smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us...” — Marcel Proust

