

The Loftschrüw

by

Adam Kroeker

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degrees of

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Abstract

"The Loftschruw" is a novella that presents a creative argument for the viability, both ethically and aesthetically, of a 21st century nostalgic work. It is an approach grounded in the current neuroscientific understanding of the brain that abandons postmodernist and psychoanalytic views of nostalgia. This shift preserves the intuitive viewpoint that nostalgia is a natural human emotion that should not be restrained with post-war trauma or guilt. With nostalgia freed from such limitations, it becomes possible to write a philosophically consistent nostalgia story that produces pleasure through "unexpected familiarity" in both form and content.

*It was the same world then as now—the same,
Except for little differences of speed*

- E.J. Pratt (“Towards the Last Spike”)

I

My workspace: a cement tomb with rows of high-backed chairs, ready for varnish. Boxes full of sawdust. A lathe, idle. And this flimsy steel desk snapped up at a garage sale.

I flip over the picture that came in the mail today. I don't know when it was sent. The corners have rubbed round, or maybe it was cut that way. The photo, too—all black and white—could've been made a week ago, doctored, or taken honest a long time in the past.

But he is in it. Although his hair is covered by a winter-coat's hood, there is that same moustache, tapered jaw, forehead glimmer: so characteristic, nothing could change them. Not even thirty years.

It was 1978, just after Labor Day, when old Klaas died up in Neuhorst. Mom got the news early Friday morning; she knew that we were going to be pressed for time. See, they had scheduled the funeral service on a Sunday afternoon because they wanted the farmers to be able to make it out. Mom didn't even bother to cancel her weekend shifts; she just revved up the engine and started driving as fast as that Winnebago could handle. We couldn't miss it, she said, it wasn't even a question.

It wasn't like they kept in touch. He had only spoken to her once in eight years. But he told her then that he was making a special gift for her. Maybe that was enough.

I spent that whole trip looking out the RV's rear window. The fence posts, cornfields, elms looked different from that view, as if they were the ones with wheels. But the winds picked up the Sunday we arrived, and it got so dusty—just billows and billows of the stuff—that all those things, even the road, disappeared, and it looked like we were skimming atop yellow domes of cloud.

We drove for two days straight, pulling over on the side of the road every six hours for Mom to nap. She just put the four-ways on and climbed up into the bed in the overhead

compartment above the driver's seat.

A sleep, deep enough to give you dreams, isn't possible with life on the road. All of my rest came when I lay my head on my arms and let the wobble of the table lull me into a state that was somewhere between the consciousness of an animal and a vegetable. In that state, your senses never shut down; there is no escape from the sounds of the semi trucks rumbling by in the passing lanes.

It was around Sunday noon when we neared the border at Emerson. That line-up of cars was half a mile long: retirees, golfers, people cashing in on the exchange. Customs didn't care that we were going for a funeral that was supposed to start within the hour. Didn't give a hoot about some no-name inventor-cum-farmer out in the sticks—they had protocol to follow. Driver's license, birth certificate. Windy? That sounds like a foreign name, they told Mom.

“Do you want the story?” she asked, laughing a bit. She always laughed when she was nervous.

That's okay, we could go right on through. Welcome to Canada.

She had told it to me many times. Born March 21st, 1952, right on the kitchen floor. They had had a very dry spring in Ohio that year. When the winds started picking up, all the dirt in the fields was blown around because there weren't any roots wide enough keep it put. As she was being born, so the story goes, the sky outside was as black as burnt toast. When she finally came out, sticking to all that dog hair collected on that kitchen floor, her father called her Windy.

He must have been a little ways out in left field to name her that in those conservative times. And the nurse at the hospital must have thought so, too, for when they went in to get her birth certificate, the nurse wrote her name down as Wendy. Mom still cracks up when she tells people that she has two first names. But that first name, the foreign one, is most important to her because it came from her birth parents; they died in a car crash in Kansas City when Mom was

just fifteen.

That's how she came up north to Canada—she found out in the will that she was to live with a Mr. Klaas Penner. A godparent, somehow. It must have been terrible for a girl her age having to drop everything she knew and suddenly take up some new parents. But she ended up getting along alright—of course, up until that year she had to leave.

“Hurry up and put on your suit!” Mom yelled to the back as soon as we had turned off of the main road running through Emerson. I reluctantly climbed out from the table seat and walked towards the small closet beside the washroom door. I popped open the little plastic latch and grabbed my dark blue pantsuit from the hanger.

“We're getting close,” Mom said, “we've turned West!”.

The Wild West! Westward Ho! I dropped my pants to my ankles.

This was highway 243, the Post Road. *Die Post Wajch*, Mom called it. She still knew some of the Plautditsch that she had learned from her time over here, and she would throw the words into normal English conversation just for fun. The Post Road ran from Emerson all the way to Mountain City, joining with the Boundary Commission Trail up there—that was the path the Mounties took on their way to stop the smugglers in Fort Whoop-Up.

As for the Post Road, well, it didn't get its name from mail delivery like the Post Road down around Boston did. Truth be told, I'm not even sure the Mennonites living on the West Reserve had a mail system that ran between the villages. Really, all the Post Road used to be was a long line of sticks coming out of the swamp lands, marking out ground solid enough for a cart to pass over. Just follow that line and you could keep from ending up waist-deep in cattails. Straight and narrow, boy; straight and narrow.

Once I had got my dress shirt over my shoulders, Mom turned her head to the back and asked, “Hey, why don't you come to the front here to look at the scenery?” Her eyes looked

different; lines ran beneath them like washouts after a thaw.

I started doing up my bottom buttons as I walked towards the passenger's seat. The strong wind was whipping across the fields, and it was making the brown sunflowers shiver. Beside the road, surrounded by a cluster of lean elms, we passed a dozen pastel-colored boxes.

Mom turned to me and asked, "Oh look, I remember those beehives!"

She pointed them out as if they meant all the world to her. Even she was prone to nostalgia, that attempt, as Goethe put it, to revive an innocent past with sweet melancholy.

We neared the end of the country mile. Just beyond the turn, there was a faded gray sign reading, "Neuhorst, Populat--. The last letters had vanished, just like most of the people.

Believe it or not, a few years after its initial construction, Neuhorst was one of the most important towns in the West Reserve; 22 family homes were listed in the 1880 census of the place. What's more, it was home to Isaak "Kaiser" Mueller, the *Obervorsteher* of the entire West Reserve until 1886. He was the one who commissioned the construction of the Post Road.

"This is it," Mom said, tapping the steering wheel with her rings, "Neuhorst."

'Horst' is one of those few words that has the same meaning in German and in English: a raised hill of earth; or, a thicket. Where Abraham found the ram caught by its horns.

Neuhorst was a town unlike any of the ones we drifted through in the States. Every yard had a derelict old barn—beside it, a modern bungalow—the juxtaposition was so striking that a traveler coming from the future would think that his machine had somehow combined two centuries into one.

As we made our way down the village's only road, a pack of four Black Labradors and a Golden Retriever came and sat down, right on the yellow lines. Mom started to honk the horn.

The dogs sat there, panting. She honked again. This time, a door opened in a house a hundred yards off the road to our left. A dour man walked out, holding an oversize copy of some

Guinness Book of World Records. His wife followed after him, wearing a pale green dress and a black headscarf. They looked like they had lard running through their veins. The man gave three quick thumps on his book. Before long, the dogs loped back off the road to meet him on the cement steps.

Mom waved and we kept driving. The liquid crystal display in the dash was rounding 1:00.

“We can still make it,” Mom said, “there was probably a delay. That happens, the body is not always ready...”

We made a right turn at the edge of town, post #17. A dirt road scratched its way between two wheat fields, headed towards a stook of trees a mile down. Despite the narrow trail, absurdly ridged in the middle, Mom hit the gas. Dirt thumped the undercarriage. Grain rasped against the windows. Something smelled like compost.

“Now Kace, don't you mind if the people stare at you. Just hold your head up, understand? We're proud of what we've done.”

Mom lifted the windshield visor. We were passing through the shade of the shelterbelt: a tangle of elm, cottonwood, and Manitoba maple. Spending so much of my life on the open highway, I found it remarkable that there should be roads so closely hugged by trees.

The tree-cover ended when the road bent back towards the West. This was a clearing, and there, sure enough, was a farmhouse, two storeys tall, built on a grass plateau. It was painted white—the same color as everything else in those parts—except for some carved green trim around the windows.

A half-dozen cars were parked at the base of the hill. Mom glided into an empty spot—the closest one she could find—and clicked the shift-stick into park. The last bubbles and pops in the engine line faded away.

“Ready? Let's go,” she said, “and remember, no talking. We've got to show our sadness.”

I clunked the cab door closed behind me.

Mom walked around the front of the vehicle and took my hand. She was still wearing her orange and red dress, but it was too late to change it into something more funeral-ready now. The wind was tugging at it, wanting to lift it up—to make her a bigger spectacle. Things like that couldn't go unpunished.

A small number of people were still huddled on a bald spot on right side of the yard. We scampered in the direction of the group, straight across the open grass, as fast as her heels would let her.

There were only old men in the crowd—that is, as far as we could tell from looking at their backsides. None of them turned around to even notice we were there.

A flatbed trailer sat in the middle of the circle, probably pulled in just for the service. On top of the trailer, a man in a brown suit was pacing back and forth. He was shouting, trying to belt it out like an old-time preacher. But he was a little man, and without the aid of a microphone, his voice sounded instead like a chord organ that hadn't warmed up.

“Look at a-this, we'll start it off way down, can't get any lower,” he began, speaking very quickly. “Put 'em in and you won't hear a thing, no nagging, no yammer-yammer. All orange, all comfort. Fits to fill the ear. You roll it, and yes! It balloons on its own. Self-expansion. That's scientific. We've got ten boxes here, ten boxes. One-fifty in each box. And that's pairs, don't forget. Buy 'em for a business, a shop, a bedroom. You bet! Whatd'ya say, let's start it out at thirty, thirty, thirty. Do I see a thirty? Can't make 'em for that price! One hundred percentile pure foam. C'mon then, let's try it out with a ten. All these plugs for a Johnny Mac!”

By this time, Mom was chewing on her glasses—the part that goes back over the ear. I could hear the chomp and scrape. Without having any previous experience with funerals, I found

the whole spectacle quite exciting.

Having seen enough, Mom pulled me by my sleeve in the direction of the house. Her heels made holes in the grass.

Near the old home, a flight of wooden steps trickled down the hill to the grassy lot below. We clomped up the stairs, while I tried to figure out if this was one of Mom's typical mood-swings, or something more.

The stairs led up to a covered porch that connected to the house. The porch was bare except for a three-legged stool that sat off to the left side—a stool so tall that one would nearly have to stand to be able to sit on it easily.

Mom walked right on in to the house, throwing open the screen door and the oak one behind it. I followed her into the entrance.

The room was oblong, with walls painted yellow to give it the illusion of spaciousness. To our right, there was a small closet for coats that could be fastened with a sliding door. Beside the closet was a small key rack with a pastoral scene painted on the backboard that held a few labeled keys.

We left the entrance through an open door on the far end and crossed into a green-wallpapered kitchen. I detected a scent that resembled brown glue.

Despite the timeless wallpaper, all of the kitchen appliances were modern, including a fashionable table with a number of chairs. A vestigial hole in the ceiling was the only indication that this place had ever held an iron stove. Three doorways led out of the room: one we had just come from, one on the right-hand side of the room, where a strange square of walls jutted out, and one (without a door) that led West down a narrow hallway to other parts of the main floor.

Hearing movement from one of the rooms down this corridor, Mom turned left through the open archway. I followed.

To our right, we passed doors to the master bedroom and then the study. On the South side of the hall, another archway led to a sitting room.

But the faint noise was coming from a door straight ahead to the West, a door that looked like it had been changed around many times over the years. A cool breeze entered the hallway when Mom opened it up.

The room was dark, except for a small aura coming from a table lamp fitted with a red bulb. The light was partially eclipsed by the outline of a man.

"The bathroom is down the hall," he said, without turning from his work.

I saw Mom reach for a light switch and flick it up. Something in the wall gave a pop and a buzz, as if electricity in this house operated at a walking pace. A sixty-watt bulb fixed to the ceiling joists turned on, illuminating the room. The man sat at a table containing the lamp, two plastic bins, a projector unit, and a stand where strings of negatives were draped. A small pink door was set in the wall to the right of the table. There were black garbage bags taped over the windows, and a sink to my right was full of a strong-smelling liquid. This, along with a sea-green range on the other side of the room, served to indicate that the room had been a functioning summer kitchen not too long ago.

Mom spoke. "What in the old man's name are they doing out there, Hank?"

"Windy?..." The man put down what he was working on and turned around his chair so that he was facing us. He looked young—early thirties—but his hairline was already receding, and his face was accented by a five-day mustache.

He blinked. "I thought it might be good to have an auction: make it a little easier to move around, make it a little less hard on the nerves. What are you doing here? You're lucky I didn't have one in the vat."

"I'm here for the service. Where's the hearse? Where's the preacher? Where's the

casket?!”

“The funeral? Oh no,” he gestured, “not today. We had him all done up a week ago already.”

“That can't be, I got the letter two days ago, three at most. It said...”

“It's over, Windy. He's already waiting in the jar.”

Mom threw up her arms. “The jar? You had him burnt?!”

“What does it matter to him, Windy? Not like he's around to see it...”

“He was a deacon, Hank!”

“You know how things are, Windy. We've got to deal with the times. There was no money for a fancy box. I mean, I've been back here for about nine months already, just trying to make ends meet after the studio closed down in the city. It's not like I wanted to come, what with those fundamentals Dad and I disagreed on. But his memory had fallen off so much in these last few years that I felt sorry for him. Funny thing is, he didn't even remember our problems when I got back. Treated me just like he did when I was seventeen.”

“So what now?” Mom said, “Turn around?”

Tears pooled in her eyes. She took off her glasses and covered her face with her hands.

“C'mon now,” Hank said. “Did you come just to sit through an hour long service?”

Mom took a brief look down, as if the words she wanted to say were lying somewhere on the wood floor.

“I don't know why,” she said, “but I had to. Because of that mess when I left, this whole period of life here has seemed kind of like a mole on the side of the face: a blemish, something you don't want there but see every time you look in the mirror. I thought that by coming back, maybe I'd be able to remove it altogether, or remember that it wasn't all bad, at least.

“He called me once, I don't know how he tracked down the number. If you ever come

back, he told me, I'll have a special present waiting for you. That was the last thing I heard him say."

Mom turned to face the corner, and then blew her nose into her sleeve. When she had collected herself, she turned back to us.

"I'm fine," she said.

Hank took a step backwards, and the heel of his shoe just grazed my toe.

"Oh, damn! Sorry," he muttered, spinning his head around. When he realized that he had just cussed in front of a child, his nose turned red.

"Hank..." Mom said, "this is Kace."

He put his hand up over his mouth. A little unsteady, he crouched down until his mustache was even with my eyes. "How old are you, Kace?" he asked.

I looked over at Mom.

"He's in Third Grade," she said.

"Kace, this is Hank," she said, her voice still cracking.

Hank took my hand and gave it a light shake, as if he was afraid I would break.

"Say, I could use your help to feed the geese. It must be early afternoon and they haven't got their lunch yet. How about it? Give you a genuine farm experience before you head homeward."

"Geese?" Mom asked. "Kace, I think we should get going."

"No, no." Hank said. "They don't bite. Don't even have any teeth."

II

We left the room through the small pink door. As we were walking out, Hank flung off his apron, revealing a white button-up shirt tucked in to brown slacks without a belt. We found ourselves standing in open air, with the house behind us to the East.

From this vantage point, on top of the plateau surrounding the house, the rest of the yard was visible. Just down the hill to the West was a cluster of large maples, their boughs covered in yellowing leaves. A small creek spooled its way underneath them. Beyond this, the trees grew smaller, but closer together. Through this dense bush, the roof of a long building could be seen: more full of holes than a cheese grater.

Hank beckoned us to follow him around the side of the summer kitchen, where three burlap bags of feed were leaning against the siding. A stack of pails sat nearby. He took two pails, pouring a bit of seed into each from a hole in one of the bags.

We walked down, bushwards. The hill around the house was not large, ten feet high at most, with a gradual slope. I would have rolled down it if not for the frequency of goose droppings.

“Where are your geese?” Mom asked, once we had reached the shade.

“Oh, they're free range,” Hank replied, “but they won't be far.”

“They don't fly away?”

“Well, that's the thing, of course; a goose is much harder to keep than a chicken. A chicken flaps a little, sure, but doesn't get anywhere. A goose is free to go if it wants. But it'll always stay if it's tame. It knows where its food comes from. The trick is, you've got to teach them early. Soon as you get them in, you've got to put them inside a cage or a high fence. They'll be happy as long as their basic needs are met. After a month or two, you can take the fence down. By that time, you've changed something in their brain. They'll never cross that line where

the fence used to be, at least none have as long as I've been doing it."

He reached into his pocket and pulled out a thick blade of grass he kept in there for who-knows-how-long. After shaking off the lint, he held it between his thumbs while cupping his hands. He licked his lips, making sure there wasn't a dry spot on them, then he blew. The grass let out a mid-ranged squawk.

"Sounds more like a duck," he said, "but it's what they've heard since birth, so they don't know the difference."

He blew two more times. Soon enough, we heard leaves rustling, and four geese waddled in from around the trees.

"My babies!" said Hank as they approached. "Go ahead, throw them some food."

Mom beckoned me over and let me take a handful of grain. It was damp. The geese, seeing this, started honking in my direction. Before they got too close, I tossed the seed on the ground. They stopped their advance and began to slurp it up.

"Those geese go through two bags a week," Hank said, "they need to be fed no matter what's going on. Stoics, they are. If one of them goes under the knife, loses his head right in plain sight, the others don't even lose their appetites. Hard on a guy when he, too, is dealing with death and finding it different. But you've gotta feed them, morning, noon, and night. I guess the pattern of it is sort of helpful. Gets one out of doors, at least."

Mom turned to Hank.

"Were you there when it happened?" she asked. "I mean, with Klaas? I know it might be hard to talk about and all, but it's been on my mind."

Hank bit his lip.

"You know, if it hadn't rained so much earlier in the Summer, it could've turned out differently. He might have been lawn bowling in the old folks home down the street; that's no

hard work. And the doctor even told him it wasn't good to be driving in that swather without a cab. But that's how he was, the old man, he wanted to feel that connection with the land. All that chaff and dust in the air; it must have been hard on his lungs."

Hank poured out the pail.

"After it was over, I found the swather stopped at the far side of the field. That old swather was so slow that he must have thought it would be faster getting to the farmyard on foot. So I guess he ran back, swatting through the waist-high wheat he hadn't cut, and went crashing through the row of wind-breakers, until he burst into the kitchen".

He started to stumble through his words, "Boy, I won't forget that. I heard banging and came running in from the dark room. Well, my eyes were still adjusting to the light, when, all-sudden, I see him there on his hands and knees. There was something different about his face. This face was coloured-off, a mix of grease and dirt, and he looked kind of like a creature made of soil itself.

"You know, he complained of having a bad night before he went to the field, but I thought nothing of it. He left the house as usual with his lunch box and a thermos full of cold coffee—that's why I didn't bother to check. Boy, I wish I had. I looked out the window that morning and watched as he started up the machine. I had never done that before that day. Isn't that funny?

"And then the next time I saw him, he was on his hands and knees. 'Pills! Water!', that's what he kept saying. And I was scrambling, not sure what to do. He must have flung open the medicine cabinet and bumped those glass bottles off of the shelf. He had thick fingers, you know. So there were pills and cotton all around between the bottom cupboards and the fridge. And I called the ambulance right away, but it took 'em fifteen minutes to get out here." He shook his head, "Fifteen minutes..."

Hank spit. Looking at the ground, he started kicking dirt over the wet spot.

"I shouldn't have asked," Mom said.

Hank kept kicking.

Mom chewed her lip. She paced for a second, then walked over towards him.

"Here." She gave him a hug, putting her arms just around his shoulders. The two of them were the same height.

She stayed fixed in this pose like an actress at the end of a scene, waiting for the lights to dim. Then, slowly, Mom let her hands drop away at his sides.

"Thanks, Windy," Hank said. His nose was red again.

We picked up the pails and headed back up the hill, leaving the geese to finish their meal. By that time, our stomachs were noticeably empty as well, and Hank told us to take anything from the fridge that we wanted. It was full of eggs and condiments. So Mom fried up a pan full of them—sunny side up—and we had a quiet meal in the kitchen.

Hank, meanwhile, went out to attend to the auction, which was just coming to a close. We heard the trucks putter off of the yard as we ate. By the time we had put the plates in the sink, even the flatbed trailer had been moved from its place on the lawn.

Mom, still disappointed that we missed the funeral, said she was ready to leave. As I washed up, she wrote a little note of appreciation for Hank, in case we didn't see him on the way out.

With everything in order, we left the house and climbed down the steps towards the Winnebago. A wide stripe of dust accented the bottom half, and it blended in so perfectly with the true color that it could have been the natural paint.

Mom bought that motor home in 1970—same time she got me. We drove all over the States in that thing. The gas was cheaper those days, so Mom felt that she could go wherever the winds would take us. Whenever our money would run low, we would stop in a town—never

longer than a year—where she could pick up a job as a waitress. She had wavy red hair, so the tips were good, and she could feed us with the fries and coleslaw left over at the end of her shift.

Finally at the bottom of the hill, Mom and I settled into the vehicle. The leather seats felt sticky, even though the sun hadn't been direct.

“Put your seatbelt on,” Mom told me, although she never wore her own in those days. The steel buckle warmed my fingers. She pulled the mirror down from the flap and examined her face. Finding it satisfactory, she flipped it back up.

But then she spotted Hank, who was running around the bottom of the hill in our direction. He came right up to the RV, and knocked on the driver-side window, as if it was a door. Mom rolled it down.

“I hope you weren't planning to take off without saying goodbye! Really, don't feel rushed to leave. You're more than welcome here. Won't be a burden at all.”

“I'm sorry, Hank, we didn't know how long you'd be. We left a note. But really, an afternoon is all we really planned for.”

Her hand reached for the key and turned it.

Something was wrong. The motor chugged, but it did not turn over. Mom tried again. This time, she pressed down on the accelerator as she tried to start it. There was a whinnying noise, but no ignition.

Mom rapped her hands against the steering wheel and muttered something below her breath.

“Give it some gas,” Hank said.

Mom did not look pleased. “Thanks, I've tried that already,” she said.

“Well, then, pop the hood. We'll see what the matter is, first-hand.”

“You don't have to do this, Hank,” Mom said, “we'll be alright”. She reached down with

her left hand and fumbled around underneath the steering wheel. She found the cord, and the hood popped open with a triumphant clunk.

Hank walked around to the front of the vehicle and propped the lid open. Mom opened the door and followed.

“Stay here,” she told me.

I even kept my seatbelt fastened, and tried to watch them through the small gap between the open hood and the dash. Hank rolled back the sleeves on his white dress shirt, then started poking around in the engine compartment.

A quizzical look came across his face, and with that he bent over and pressed his face right up against the battery. He had spotted something down below. He nodded to himself, and then plunged into the guts of the machine with his right arm. The object he was looking for appeared just out of reach, so he lowered his head once again and bent over as far as his body would let him.

With this action, I saw his dress shirt come untucked from the his pants, revealing his pale white skin and the humble beginnings of a crack. Mostly, you could just see that dark cleft between the skin and pants, like a little warren dug by rabbits in the snow.

When Hank came back up from the motor, the shoulder of his white shirt was soiled in grease. He pulled out a ribbed rubber belt.

“Oh, boy” he said. “This doesn't look good...”

“It's just a belt,” Mom scoffed.

“Just a belt? It's never just a belt,” said Hank, waving it around. He walked over to where Mom was standing and doubled the belt over in his hands. The ribs squished together.

He chuckled. “Windy M. Dalton! You've been a very naughty girl. I warned you something like this would happen if you didn't slow down.”

He lifted the belt five inches, then brought it down, smacking it twice against his open palm. It clapped. He lifted again, quicker this time. In a small arc, he swung the belt down towards Mom. The tip caught the corner of her orange dress, just hard enough to make it swish. Mom jumped a step back and let out a small giggle.

“Do it again,” said Hank, “and I’m taking your keys away for good!”

He reached towards her, trying to give her a hug with his dirty sleeve.

Mom slapped his arm aside, “Get that out of here, Hank! C’mon, tell me. How bad does it really look?”

Hank sauntered back over to the open hood. “Looks like you jammed the pulley on your, ah, alternator when the belt snapped. It doesn’t spin at all.”

“Seriously, Hank, we need to get going. Who can fix this?”

“Well, there’s a shop in Neuhorst,” Hank replied. “Of course, it’s not going to be open on a Sunday.”

Mom tilted her head back and took a deep breath. “What then?” she said.

“Wait it out,” he said, “it’s just one more day. Free room and board.”

He started to walk towards my door, and kept talking without looking at Mom. “I’ll call in to the shop tomorrow ’n see what they’ve got in stock.”

Hank was right up at my window now. “Will cost you hardly nothing at all.”

I heard a click within the door mechanism. Hank pulled it open. “Better hop out, kid,” he said, “old Bessie here won’t be driving today”.

I unbuckled my seatbelt. Hank held out his hand to help me down. I ignored it and just jumped.

After I was out, Hank addressed us both. “Well, why don’t we do that then, and I’ll get you a room set up for the night”.

Reluctantly, we grabbed our suitcases from the back of the Winnebago and climbed the hill to the porch. Hank pulled out key ring from his pocket and put one of the keys in the lock on the door. There was no click that usually accompanies the pulling back of the deadbolt. Hank tried the knob, and realized the door had not been locked.

“Oh,” he said. He pulled the door open. “I always forget.”

We crossed through the entrance room into the kitchen, where this time we turned right towards the door leading into the strange peninsula.

“Best room in the house,” Hank said, “seeing that the master bedroom is taken.”

Behind the door ran a narrow staircase, with two dozen steps that were abnormally shallow and uncomfortably tall.

“The attic? Are you serious, Hank?!” Mom asked. “I’ve never liked these steps. You know it.”

Hank started to climb up, then reached back and grabbed Mom’s left hand, which was not occupied with a suitcase. He tugged her after him.

“C’mon Windy, remember the view?”

They bickered back and forth all the way up the stairs. At the top, we emerged in an upstairs room that was completely lined with wooden slats. The roof slanted down sharply on both sides. Two doors led off from it, but only the door to the North was open. Outdoor light was coming from it.

“This is it, spunk!” Hank said. We walked into the room. An oval red-brown area rug had been spread out across most of the open floor. Right beneath the window, in the center of the room, was a double bed made from some light wood. To one side of the bed, there was a chest of drawers, to the other, a homemade bookshelf, a toy chest, and a low table nearly breaking under the weight of a bulky television.

The first thing Mom did was to walk over and turn it on. A picture slowly formed out of blackness until we could make out moving people.

“Shoot—it's only black and white,” she said.

“Good picture, though,” said Hank. He paced about for a few more seconds as we dropped our bags, and then clapped his hands loudly. “Well, I'll let you get settled in,” he said.

He walked back into the empty room towards the staircase and turned around. The steps were so narrow that it was safest to climb down backwards. As he went, he pulled the trapdoor behind him. The hole in the floor sealed up.

The room looked like it hadn't been used in a while. Dust lifted when we touched the quilt that covered the bed. The quilt, Mom said, was made by Klaas' younger sister Hedy. She died when she was twelve years old: suffered from a lordotic curvature of the back. Because it was difficult for her to walk she would sit on her rocking chair and make quilts. She loved farm animals, Mom said, and always had the windows open when she knitted. When she heard an animal sound coming from outside, she would stitch a picture of the animal on the quilt in front of her. On our bed quilt, there was a black horse that was learning how to walk on the top left corner, and on the bottom right there was a rooster standing on the back of a sheep.

We took some time putting a few sets of clothes away in the chest of drawers, and Mom changed into something more comfortable—one of her sandy-colored sundresses that she wore so often in those days. It was a little wrinkled from being kept in the suitcase. To straighten it out, Mom lay back in the bed and kept as still as she could. She always told me that got out the wrinkles better than any iron could. I don't know where she got that idea from.

“Hmph... who'd have thought?” she said, staring up at the ceiling slats, “being back here, stuck. Like I'm being forced to relive it all over again. Strange how it's death that brought me here both times, isn't it?”

“That first time, when I was just girl, I remember shivering while I stood at that train station, shaking nearly to pieces. That was in Winkler. It wasn't much either in those days, especially in the snow. I waited nearly half an hour. And then I saw it, this strange black thing coming along the ground, over the drifts. Poof, poof, poof, like that.

“Drove right down main street. I just wanted to hide. Had second thoughts right there. I didn't want to be snatched away to some new way of life. But Klaas had already seen me. He was sitting in the machine like some kind of Saint Nick. His beard had caked white with ice.

“So I climbed in, thinking he's got to be okay. We didn't talk much that ride over to the house, we couldn't really, with the wind. But soon enough, there I was, pulling up through the trees towards this tall house. And the boys were watching from the windows, even through the frost.”

Mom chuckled, and rolled over onto her side to look at me.

“Turn on that TV again, will you, please, Kace?” she asked. I walked towards the television and turned it on.

“Find something empty.” I clicked the dial to channel 3, where there was no reception. There was that typical snowy image with a constant hiss, like water that can't quite bring itself to a boil.

“Perfect. Right there,” she said. Within ten minutes, she was fast asleep. I, drowsy too, crawled into bed beside her. We didn't wake up again until the next morning.

III

I opened my eyes. Early morning light from the window was filling the wooden room. The blankets, even my hands, looked as if they were dusted with gold paint. I shifted around. Mom was still lying in bed, awake. She was watching the television on mute.

“Good morning, you,” she said as I got up. “We must have needed that sleep.”

I had to go to the bathroom. Getting up, I ran over to the dresser to throw some new clothes on. That finished, I scampered out the bedroom door into the attic's bare room. That was when I heard the voice.

“...yeah, that's right, the whole unit. It's all gotta be replaced. Second-hand is fine, yes.”

I froze. In an old house, things don't seal right. There are little gaps between doors and walls, walls and windows. Nothing fits snug. And when the kitchen is built right in the middle of things, sounds coming from there are bound to be heard in a few corners of the house.

“A week? Really. No, no, that's what I expected.”

The sound had a distinct source; it was coming from my right. There, cut out of the wall, just a foot off the ground, was a strange square hole.

Slowly, trying not to let the creaking of my feet over the floorboards fill the room below, I made my way over in its direction.

“Don't worry about it then. Yah, that's okay, I'll dig something up over here.”

When I was close enough to the hole, I got down on my belly. A tapered shaft led from the hole into the kitchen below. The hole was big enough to fit my head. Without a thought, I squeezed it in.

The shaft smelled like an inside pocket of an old coat. I looked down. The ceiling of the room below was not even three feet below me. After the black walls of the shaft ended, I could see the pale linoleum of the kitchen floor and just the very corner of the table.

All of a sudden, the white floor was obscured. Hank was passing over. His hair was slicked back. He was making motions with his hands as he talked. But there was no one else in the room, and he wasn't holding a phone.

The smell in the shaft was so stale I could feel it on my tongue. I had to cough. I coughed. The shaft gave an empathetic rattle.

Hank stopped pacing and looked up. I squirmed, trying to take my head out of the pipe. There was a rattling sound on the doorknob downstairs. By the time I had withdrawn completely, Hank was looking at me from the top of the staircase. My eyes grew wide.

He spoke to me in a near-whisper. "Do you want to know something interesting?" he asked. He had come right up to me now, and put his hand on my shoulder.

"When your Grandpa Klaas was a boy, they used to smoke meat up here." He pointed up to several large hooks on the ceiling that I hadn't noticed before. "See those? They would hang the pigs from there, by their feet, then they would open up that shaft. It was hooked up to the big black stove down below.

"Imagine this—the whole room would fill with smoke," he continued, "and they'd let it sit that way for a few hours. When it was all done, they would slice that pig up, and boy, that was the best tasting meat you could have."

His voice must have alerted Mom in the other room.

“Hank!” she said, “I’m sure he doesn’t want to hear history like that! He’s in a strange house as it is!”

“Come on, now,” Hank said, looking back at me, “You found it interesting, didn’t you?”

He tussled his hand through my hair, and then walked by me into the bedroom.

“Bad news,” he said.

Mom sighed. “Hank, I just want to go home. I’ve got a life, you’ve got a life. It’s not fair to be thrown in here, bumping into each other. But it seems that once you fall into this slough, you need a hand to get out.”

“Good, that’s what I like to hear.” Hank moved up to the bed and put his arm on her shoulder as he talked. Mom was looking at the television.

A forlorn nurse, on the verge of tears, was staring into the doctor’s eyes, waiting for his prognosis. I’m sure it was General Hospital—Mom watched it every day she stayed home from work—but the monochrome colors of the TV made it impossible to tell whether the episode was current or if it was a rerun from the early sixties.

“I’ll tell you what I’m gunna do,” Hank continued. “I’ll dig around in the combine shed for a bit and see what I can find—knowing Dad, there isn’t a part in the world that he didn’t have at least one of.”

“In there? It’s falling down, Hank!”

“Ha, ha,” he laughed. “Everything’s in some state of falling down, Windy. It’ll be fine. They built it strong.”

“Probably a fox hole by now, that place!” she continued.

“I’ll take a stick,” he said.

“Alright, Hank. I appreciate it.”

Hank, smiling, walked into the smoke room towards me. He closed the door softly shut

behind him.

“Hey, Kace, follow me. I want to show you something.”

I followed him, having to go downstairs anyway. After I finished up in the washroom, I found him across the hallway in the sitting room.

The room was bright, lit from two tall windows on either side of a large couch the colour of a crow. Even more astonishing, the walls appeared to be covered in hundreds of wallet-sized black-and-white photographs, many in frames. Things like that stay with you through the years.

Hank was sitting in the middle of the couch. Above his lap, stretching between the arms of the sofa, was a two-bladed wooden propeller, probably six feet long.

“Do you know what this is?” he asked. I came up close. “A *Loftschrüw*: that's what we call it in German.”

He ran his hand across its finish, as if this was something propeller etiquette demanded.

“—a propeller. These blades on it are really like two little wings,” Hank kept on. “Do you see how it's bevelled up here? When it moves around through the air, the wind kind of catches right here and forces the plane forwards. Zoom! What an idea; using the air against itself.”

He grabbed my hand and guided it along the blade as well.

“Feel that? Do you know how old it is? They don't make them in wood any more, not since the first World War. And to think, we almost lost it; Dad wanted it to be buried with him. Would have been, too, if we had gone that route. This here prop is just like the ones the Canadian planes had that flew in battle. We had some pilots to be proud of in that war: Billy Bishop, and Collishaw, and... boy, a lot of greats.”

He lifted the propeller as he stood up. Turning around, he crouched. Then, he slid the blade along the floor until it was hidden underneath the sofa.

He looked over his shoulder at me.

“Hey, Kace. Do you feel like an adventure? What do you say we take a look around in the old shop.”

I kept my mouth shut, fearing anything I said could be used against me. I knew what Mom would say if she found out I had been playing around in a fox den.

“Come on. There's nothing to be scared of. You're a country boy, right? Straight tough!” Hank kept prodding, “We can really make your Mom happy if we find what we're looking for!”

I didn't refuse. He started walking towards the trapdoor, expecting me to follow. Soon, we were out the summer kitchen door. Each of us took a flashlight.

It was a perfect fall afternoon. Overhead, the air came alive with the sound of wild geese, slowly rousing themselves for the long trip before them. Even the side of the house looked presentable, with a gown of golden leaves all around it.

We made our way down the slope into the deeper shade. The air felt clammy, but cool.

“Hey, look at the mushrooms!” Hank exclaimed. He nudged me, “I remember when your mother and I used to come out here with our baskets and pick them for Dad's soup. Boy, I guess I'm dating myself.”

I kept to myself as we walked. He continued, “You know how to tell which are the good mushrooms? Stop here.” I held up. He got down on all fours and plucked one of them from the ground. Flipping it over on its back, like a helpless turtle, he said, “In these parts, if its clean down there, no frills along the stem, then it's good to eat.” He broke the mushroom in half. “Try it?”

I made a sour face.

As we neared the old machine shed, we came across some farming equipment that had turned green with moss and corrosion after sitting in the rain for so many years. It was here, too, we met the small creek that Hank said ran across the yard. Although it couldn't have been deeper

than a child's height, someone had built a makeshift bridge by throwing a few two-by-fours over the stream. One at a time, Hank and I scuttled across to the other side.

In twenty yards, the trees gave way and we were standing before the shop—right where there should have been a shadow if the sun hadn't been directly overhead.

“You know what, Kace?” he asked. “Your Grandpa Klaas used to build machines in there, all sorts of moving things. He was an inventor. They would sell them all over the country.”

“They even had fifteen men working for them at one time,” Hank continued. “Fifteen men: that was a big company in those days.”

He let the words linger in the air.

I was almost surprised when he started talking once again. Hank continued, “When I was about your age, I would climb in those trees over there and watch the combine machines roll out through those big doors in front. Psheew, just think of the size of their tires; paddlewheels of the prairies, J.K. used to say. We were best of brothers in those days.

“One after another they kept pouring out, just sparkling in the sun. Humming. We always tried to imagine where they would end up. Those places, like Illinois or even Alberta, seemed like different worlds. That was what prairie boys dreamed of back then; that was our science fiction.”

The building was in some state of ruin, Mom wasn't lying. In the old days, one of the main roads out of town ran right to the front of the shed. J.K., when he was just hitting puberty, helped to pull the ropes as a large false front was added to the shop. This front added a dome-shape to the flat roof, right in between the two great doors. In the middle of this dome was the new company sign: K. PENNER & SON MANUFACTURING. Hank was still too young to work.

That was in 1953, when things were finally starting to pick up after those lean years

surrounding the War. Klaas had hung tough all those fighting years, continuing to build new farm equipment when most people made due with their old machines. A man of his skill could have probably made good money in weaponry. But Klaas, “as stern a pacifist as you’ll ever meet”, refused any involvement with the Cause, just like he had done during the First World War in his youth.

Story goes that he avoided involvement in that war by stating his reasons of faith before a judge up in the city. There was a big group of locals who went up together to testify—when they heard that they could work in the lumber camps in Ontario instead of going to fight in France, they let out such a whoop that guards had to usher them out of the courtroom.

That boom after the Second World War lasted a decade, until things started to change in the mid 60s. People wanted brand name machines, more padding in their seats. By 1970, young saplings were planted where the road had been, and a new driveway was built that headed directly to the house. The two doors on the shed, the ones where the harvesters had come out of, stood facing the trees—as if the yard had suddenly become a sliding puzzle and shifted around about them.

“Boy, it sure is something,” said Hank, looking up at the gaping doors. “In some things, you don’t get a second chance. When people go the way J.K. did, the guilt kind of spreads itself around. You keep wondering if you could have saved him with only a different word or two. His death was no accident, I’ll tell you that. He had cut down a lot of trees in his life. That last one, when you looked at it, had the notches inversed. He knew where it was going to fall.”

Despite the fact that the doors were open, Hank decided to enter the building by a regular-sized house door that was built beside the other two. Instead of a knob, the door had a bent latch that opened by pressing down on it. It coughed when Hank used it.

“Follow me,” he said.

Stepping inside the old shop felt like stepping into a giant stomach. You could smell it—a great mass of wood not quite rotting—turning inside out.

The floor, too, was in bad shape, mostly wet gravel or cement that had broken down over time. It crinkled as we walked across it.

A row of long worktables lined the walls closest to the small door—hacked up through decades of use. Tool boxes and plastic bolt trays were stacked along the back of each table. Although many of the labels were missing or soiled, a few still showed through the grime: 5/8, half-inch, 11mm, lock-nuts, wing-nuts, plated washers, and self-tapping screws. Some of the bins had been emptied and sold during the auction.

The most common tools like hammers and wrenches were supposed to hang from plywood sheets on the wall. Now, many of them, too, were missing—their lack made evident through shadowed outlines drawn on the board to help guide the tools back home.

As we walked to the West side of the shop, Hank decided to turn on his flashlight, even though there was some light coming down from holes in the ceiling, finding its way through the criss-cross of rafters and hidden crannies. He panned it across the room. In the deep corners of the shop, the beam was sliced apart by augers and jagged angle-irons protruding from machines that probably never even had a name.

A clear path, about ten feet wide, ran between the shop wall and this sea of steel. It was almost overwhelming—the building seemed to stretch on for miles.

“It's got to be around here somewhere,” Hank said, “keep your eyes open.”

We came to a place where bullet holes pocked the outer wall. Warm autumn light was coming through them, projecting a hundred bright dots across the path.

There, the steel wall that ran along to our right fell back, leaving some sort of open chamber. In the middle of this room was a giant white sheet, large as a film screen, and nearly as

wide. I don't know where you could get a sheet with those dimensions.

Hank scratched his leg. I came up beside him.

The cloth was not as dusty as it should have been. I reached out my hands and grabbed a bit of the fabric between my fingers. He did the same.

"Three. Two. One. Give it a pull!" Hank commanded.

The far side of the sheet whipped up, with the sound of a flock of birds leaving water. It stood, suspended free in the air for a second before it finally came crimping back on itself in our direction.

We began to make out what had been hiding underneath the cloth.

Hank whistled, before adding, "What in God's name was he making?"

It crouched there, a flying dinosaur: something that hadn't got all its functions figured out. But this was a being made of wood and tarp and iron. It had wings, two layers, one on top of the other, overshadowed even Hank. A boxwork frame showed through rips in the fabric.

"I wonder how it got this way," Hank asked, "looks like it's been torn up. Don't know how an animal could get under that tarpaulin. And I don't know if it could have come from crashing it, either."

He walked under the wings, sidling up to some sort of cockpit that rested on a series of skis. On the side of the cockpit, in light orange paint, was a single word: *Loftschrüw*.

"See this? The back has been removed from the seat. Used to come up right here, but it's been chopped off and the bottom extended. Looks like it could fit two people in a little easier now. Or maybe it's put up this way so a person could fly facing backwards if he wanted to. Some strange gift, huh, but nothing two strong minds shouldn't be able to figure out. Just think of that look on your Mom's face when she sees this thing finally delivered. Boy, won't that be something..."

IV

We went back to the machine the following day. Hank never told Mom anything except that he was going to tow the RV to the shed to work on it there. Mom seemed distant; not talking as much as she used to when it was just us together.

Hank had hooked up the RV to the back of his blue Ford with a sturdy chain he had stored behind the seat. Good for many occasions, he said.

As soon as he put the truck into drive, Hank punched the gas peddle, sending stones flying out behind us into the RV's grill. He laughed.

"Boy, we're gonna have a fun day. Get ready for greasy elbows!" He nudged me with his arm.

We drove South, veering off of the gravel onto a small trail that was little more than a set of tire tracks worn into the grass. The trail skirted the area where the auction had been held and headed from there into the trees.

Once inside the brush, Hank slowed down the truck to a crawl. Poplars had grown close to the road, and some of the outermost branches scraped along the side of the motor home behind us, making an awful sound.

The path made a cockeyed turn to the West. The whole set-up seemed like an overcomplicated attempt to avoid having to cross the creek that sometimes ran alongside the road and sometimes double-backed.

Somehow, we arrived at the old production shop. Hank drove in, turning the headlights on. When he was far enough, while still leaving room to turn around, he shifted the truck into park.

Opening the door, he got out and walked around to the back. He unhitched the Winnebago, leaving it to sit in the dark middle of the shop, and then got back in the truck.

Allowing the chain to drag over the floor, we drove forward, making a U-turn within the building. We ended up right along the far wall. There, looking over his right shoulder, Hank started backing up. Soon, I could see the tow-chain emerge from the front end of the truck like a Gordian worm from a cricket.

“Let's get it out of here, sport!” Hank said as we pulled into the small clearing around the *Loftschriiw*.

I hopped out of the truck and scuttled around to the hitch. There, I picked up the slimy chain and started to draw it back under the frame.

“Pass it here,” asked Hank, reaching for the hook at the end. I lugged it over his way. Once he took it from me, he walked backwards until the chain was at its full length. He wrapped it three times around the front axle connecting the skis together.

“I wonder how long she's sat here in this spot. Maybe she's just waiting for someone to move her—to make her feel alive again.” With one hand, he grabbed an angle iron that had come loose from the machine and passed it on to me. “Throw it in the box.”

One by one, we moved over the bent rods, broken wood and loose ski, and dropped them in the truck box until all that was left was the strange cockpit and its fraying wings. Once everything was ready, Hank lifted me up and placed me in the cockpit seat.

“Ready to fly?” he asked.

The plane moved with a terrible screeching sound as the skis slid forward over the unbroken sections of cement. Hank was in the truck, constantly checking his rearview mirror, while I had my hands over my ears.

Every so often Hank would slow down long enough for there to be slack in the chain, making sparks fly as the plane tipped backwards onto the v-shaped brace where the rear ski should have been attached.

We made it to the end of the steel hallway and turned a wide corner around the RV, pulling into a stop near the work tables. As we slowed down, I brought up my hand to my forehead to make a formal air pilot's salute. I could just imagine myself with aviator glasses and a combat helmet.

Hank got out of the truck and walked over to me.

"Well, time to get dirty," he said, grabbing a handful of tools from off of the wall, "come in here behind me."

He crawled, crab-like, onto the floor—right underneath the machine. I joined him, squeezing between the front two skis. Hank turned on his flashlight.

"She looks different from down here, doesn't she?" Hank asked.

The beam found a hole, the size of Hank's thumb, which ran through a steel plate near the bottom end of the "v" and went up into cockpit.

"See that?" he asked. "I'm going to need you to drop a bolt through there. Can you do it?"

I nodded.

We climbed back out from under the machine. This time, Hank raised me onto the brown leather chair in the cockpit.

I was amazed at what I saw: in front of the bench-seat, mounted on a crossbar of steel tubes, was a steering wheel. A small instrument panel was built into a dashboard around it. All the instruments were liquid-based, various spirit levels and Galilean thermometers. To the left of the chair, a lever stuck out of the floor.

"Pull back on the lever and move backwards," Hank said.

I did as he said and shifted my weight. The seat moved back with me, clanking over a notched track in the floor. As it moved, I noticed the roots of the wings starting to twitch. It was as if everything on the machine was linked together.

“Okay, now you should have room!”

Hank went over to his truck-box, where he had put the loose ski, and pulled out a king bolt. I took it in my left hand. Crawling down from the seat, I entered the narrow cave that had opened up. The hole was somewhere just inside.

“Wait for my signal!”

Hank went to drag the ski onto the floor. Two long steel cables had been attached to the front of the ski at either sides, so it looked like he was hauling in a catfish. Coming around one side of the machine, he pushed the ski back on the floor until it was roughly centred under the v-shaped support. At the open end, the “v” was bolted to a slightly-bowed track with a groove meant for the front end of the ski. In all, the ski was designed to steer the plane by moving like a rudder.

Hank pushed the ski up so that its point fit inside the groove. “Still breathing?” he asked, tapping on the wood below me. “See if you can jam the bolt in.”

Called into action, I juggled the bolt, trying to get it into the right spot. After straightening it out, it dropped through.

“Yeah, just like that!” Hank said. “I think you're a natural.”

I crawled over the side of the cockpit and back underneath it. Hank was leaning on one elbow; his face was lit chin-up from the flashlight resting below.

“Well, well. That's pretty good. We can't work too long, now.”

He squeezed my arm, as if we had known each other for a long time. Strangely enough, I didn't shrink back. I felt we were becoming a team of some sort, each needing the other in our own way.

“Oh, where'd all that muscle come from? Looks like someone is turning into a man! You think you want to be a man one day, Kace?”

I nodded.

“Oh, don't agree too quickly,” he said, “It's the hardest job in the world. On the first hand, you gotta do what you want for yourself so that you can feel free. But just do that and folks will look at you strange. See, you sometimes have to do what other people want; that's how you get respect. Freedom and respect, that's the balance we all want. But when you try to stir them together, shoop! They don't mix. A dilemma: oil and water.”

He started to crawl out from under the machine.

“The women, oh, they feel a struggle too, but that's usually about different things. But now what happens when a man needs a woman to solve one of his problems? Well, you've got four elements then, each trying to win out. You're better off staying a kid, trust me. Nobody expects much out of you.”

We left the shop after that and drove home through the bush in silence. Both of us were tired, and there was nothing more to say. The sun had begun to set, and shadows streamed out of the trees.

Hammers, glue, screws, drill bits, bolts, washers, nuts, bolts, washers, nuts—I started to imagine them in the other things around me. When we passed through the geese grounds, I could see how even the trees were held together by these things. Secret joints, much too small for the eye, but each nut tightened just right. When their limbs swayed in the breeze, I saw an intricate series of movements follow as if each leaf was strung together on a chain.

That was just the start of it. Every day Hank would ask me to join him for an hour or two in the morning, and an hour or two before sunset, and together we would try to figure out how the machine was supposed to fit together in a working manner.

I began to lose track of time. Or, rather, a new mode of time was taking over. Things were measured by completion of tasks rather than hours, or days, spent working. Units of time, of course, are arbitrary to begin with, and we can function just as well without them—the first European clock with a second hand wasn't made until the 17th century. It was made in Switzerland—same folks who were coming down with nostalgia by the century's end.

Whenever it was, maybe the second or third day of repairs, the next project Hank decided to tackle was the machine's cable system. A lot of it had been disconnected, and without it, the machine couldn't move.

By the time I joined him for the evening shift, he had already pulled the left-side cable around a pulley that stuck out from the end of the bow-like track at the bottom of the machine where we had worked the previous day.

“That's step one,” he said.

Next, he brought the cable back in to another pulley, two feet from the rear end of the fuselage. After circling this, Hank brought it straight back towards the front of the plane. At the point where the cable crossed over itself, a third pulley had been set up, this one vertical.

He spoke as he wove the cable around the machine.

“Dad repaired his first watch when he was only seven years old. His father gave it to him as a project. I've been thinking; that was what they could do back then. Didn't learn much in school; all that knowledge came from the home. They were born workers. You ever seen an inside of a watch? That's harmony right there. Every part does its own thing, a movement of micrometers.”

He told me to climb back into the cockpit.

From below, he fed the cable up to me through another hole in the plane's body. I lifted, making the cable climb up over another pulley. The whole thing seemed like a hopeless tangle at

the time; I have no idea how Hank managed to find some direction in it. The machine seemed to be designed to confuse—although I don't understand why Klaas would have made it that way intentionally. Cables were wrapped around pulley after pulley, and never seemed to head in a straight path.

“You know what's interesting? Even with all those combines that he built, Dad hadn't farmed a crop until he was sixty years old. That's nearly twice my age. He just picked it up and added it to his list of hobbies.”

Hank wrapped the cable around the steering column of the wheel.

“The thing he wanted to do most was to bake bread all on his own, from the seed to the loaf. And when he had an idea in mind, nothing could stop him from finishing it..”

By the time he had finished his speech, we had the whole side of the cable hooked up, front to back. After a brief drum roll, Hank turned the steering wheel to the right. Somehow, the front end of the rear ski moved with it.

“Ho, ho! Now were starting to get a feel for this thing. She's obeying us, you see, and not the other way around.”

We walked back to the house after that, feeling a sense of accomplishment. As we were crossing through the geese grounds, I spotted our bed quilt hanging from the clothesline that ran down the grassy slope to the side of the house. Mom's bare legs and blue, green, and white tie-die dress showed from the far side every time the quilt flapped.

Hank tugged the back of my shirt.

“Slow down, Kace; no need to run.”

I twisted out of his grasp and started sprinting towards the hill.

“Remember,” he called after me, “keep it a surprise!”

Ducking under the quilt, I flung myself beside Mom on the grass.

“Hey, you!” she said.

I rested my head in her lap and looked up at her from below. In the light, I could see the downy hairs on her face that women never seem to lose.

“Did you have a good day?” she asked.

I nodded.

“You’re turning into such a big worker-man; you don’t have to grow up so quickly, you know!”

She tussled her hand through my hair.

“How is the motor home coming along? Is it almost finished?”

When she asked that, I heard some footsteps approaching. Then, the clothesline dipped as Hank pulled it down to peek over the top of the quilt.

“What’s this? Finally getting some fresh air?” he asked.

“It needed to be hung out,” she said, “it smelled stale.”

The corners of the quilt tipped up in the wind. Then a ripple ran down the centre and came crashing out towards both sides as if the whole ocean had been shrunk down into these few feet of fabric.

“The thing probably hadn’t felt real air all its life. I don’t think Klaas would have had the thought to bring it out once your Mom died. I think it looks brighter already.”

Hank looked down at it. “I don’t know why you should care so much... looks just like every old quilt I’ve seen.”

“But think about her story, Hank. You ever wonder what life would have been like for Aunt Hedy? Being so young and not able to get around. Knowing that the world wasn’t made for you. But it’s something beautiful, too, not living long enough to realize that new set of grown-up problems. An eternal innocence.”

“Whatd’ya say, Kace? You wanna stay eight years old forever?” Hank let the clothesline back up before he could see if I agreed.

When I went back to the shop the next morning, I found the wings—their skeletons, I mean—set up on saw horses. From the side, they were shaped like perfect eyes, coming to a point at each end.

Hank was wearing his apron. He had begun to repair the wing-coverings. For that, Hank recycled some canvas that Klaas had been using to cover his grain-truck’s box before the incident. He cut the tarp in half and draped one of these pieces over each wing, bringing them together in the back. Doubting that a sewing machine could do the job, Hank took it upon himself to punch holes in the canvas. He then threaded yellow rope through the holes he had made, tying a knot at each end.

“Lucky this thing doesn’t have to fly on its own,” Hank said, “can you imagine if we were working with living tissue, real muscle and bone, veterinarian-like? Back in the day, one of Dad’s horses, old Shunt, took a bad angle into the creek: broke his leg.

“A horse is never the same after an accident; it always walked a little crooked. A physical memory of the event, you could call it. Most times, farmers’ll just put down a horse like that; it couldn’t even pull a cutter. But Dad didn’t. Shunt kept on getting fed twice a day until he went naturally,” Hank paused. “From then on, Dad used a tractor.”

A manual hoist had been attached to the rafters along the near shop wall. Hank pulled it into place above the sawhorses, attaching its hook around a chain we had looped around the wing. He gave the controls to me, and told me to hang on while he guided the wings into place over the axle—first through the rings in the mounting box and then through the inside of the hollow wings into clips coming off one of the master ribs of the wooden frame.

That axle, one he had scavenged from the scrap piles, went all the way through the

mounting box above the driver's head—the place that stored the gas and the motor, and eventually, the propeller.

Hank laughed. “We used to go up to old Shunt with a long feather, fit for a quill. And dare each other to stand close as we could to his behind and give it a little tickle with the feather. Oh, he'd flick with his tail once, but after that, he'd catch on and get ready to kick. Of course, his kicks went off line because of the bad leg. But one day, he somehow got Windy real hard in the stomach. We'd thought she'd bust a rib.

“I guess I've still got on some rose-coloured glasses looking back at those days. No harm in that, I suppose. Might as well get some pleasure from our memories while we still have them. Amazing how little we remember, even at your age. Hardly enough to give us an idea of who we are. Like trying to figure out what a house looks like by looking through a crack in the wall.”

He started to pound away at the axle with his hammer, trying to jar the wing into place.

“Boy, Kace, what do you think? It's starting to take on some shape. Wonder what Dad would think of all this, to see his work brought back to life. It must have been the only thing that kept him going after that year. To have Windy leave, and then that tragedy with J.K.; I guess I didn't make things easier for him, either, deciding to walk out from the church just then.

He went off to his own world after that, probably to take his mind off of the trouble. Maybe he tried to remind himself that things don't just break down; they can be built up again.”

The wings still weren't quite right when Hank pulled the hoist away. The tips wanted to sag down, putting a lot of strain on the axle. A brace in some other part of the machine popped out of place.

“Let's call it a day, shall we?” he said. “I wanna get washed up early and make a special meal for you and your Mom. When you go back to your room and see her, tell her to put her best dress on. Something as formal as that funeral dress she was wearing the first day. I want to show

her a good time.”

A few hours later, Hank called for Mom and I to join him in the kitchen. When we opened the door, the ceiling lights were off. Light was, however, coming from two slender candles in the middle of the kitchen table. An elegant cloth was draped over the table, and the finest silverware in the house was used as the place settings. On the far side of the counter, right beneath the cabinet for dry goods, an old fashioned phonograph had been set up. It was playing an early recording by Helen Forrest, whose voice was flowing out of the trumpet, filling the room: “Long ago and far away, I dreamed a dream one day, and now that dream is here beside me...”

Hank came walking towards the table from the oven, humming along to the music. He was holding a plate full of what looked like chicken breasts covered in a blueberry sauce. With the plate still cradled on his right arm, he went up to Mom and extended his other hand.

“Right this way, madam,” Hank said, showing her to her seat.

“What's this all about, Hank?” Mom asked. “Is there some sort of special occasion?”

Hank pulled out Mom's chair, the one at the foot of the table. Once she was settled, Hank gaited over to the pantry, where he pulled out a bottle of white wine that must have snuck past Klaas' guard. I went to sit down, taking the seat where the small plate had been set. Hank grabbed a corkscrew from a drawer and opened the bottle.

“Only for the grown-ups,” he said to me, filling a glass by Mom's plate.

“This is too much,” Mom said, “take a seat!”

Hank finished pouring the glass and finally sat down. He filled his own and then put the bottle back in the middle of the table, right between the two candles. Their light splashed through the wine bottle, bouncing off of the rising bubbles like tadpoles off a jar.

“Well, here it is,” said Hank, moving his hand over the table. This apparently stood in the place of a prayer for the meal, for he began cutting a piece off of his meat as soon as he had

spoken.

"I'm impressed, Hank," Mom said, "When did you learn to cook like this?"

"Oh really, it's none of my doing. All in the quality of the meat. Most goose, I know, tastes a little gamey, but that's because it's usually wild. Amazing how domestication can change a thing from the inside out."

I started removing the blueberry sauce from the top of the breast and mixed it in with the green beans, which I knew I wasn't going to eat, anyway.

"Really, Hank, what's the reason for this?" Mom said.

"A toast," Hank said, "to progress!"

He stood up, raising his wine glass and swirling the liquid around. Bringing it down, he tapped the rim of Mom's wine glass, and then the edge of my water cup, too.

"Windy, I know it's been a long week for you, but I've got a little present for your patience."

He reached over to the nook around the sink where he picked up a long cylindrical object wrapped in brown paper. He placed it across the arms of her chair. I had to move out of the way just so it would fit there.

"Okay, you can open it now," decreed Hank.

"What is this?" she asked.

"Pull the string," he said, guiding Mom's hand to one of the strings that crossed the brown paper. She tugged back, undoing the knot.

"Think of it as a hint. Although I'm going to need it back from you once the meal is done," Hank added.

The brown paper came off. Underneath, Mom found the same wooden propeller that Hank had shown me earlier on in the family room.

“For an airplane?” Mom said, “I’m sorry, Hank, I don’t get it.”

The phonograph reached the end of the song and the music was replaced by hisses and pops.

“Remember that gift Dad said he was going to make for you? Well, this is a part of it. But you’ll have to wait for the whole thing.”

He went over and took the propeller back from her.

“Oh, that’s so strange! What would he think I’d want to do with an airplane? Heh. To be honest Hank, I was hoping you were going to tell me that you had finished fixing my motor home.”

“Oh, yes. That’s coming soon, too, of course. Many surprises.”

I put down my fork and knife, letting them clank against the plate. Hank, meanwhile, leaned back in his seat, with his arms crossed behind his head. Under the table, I felt his leg brush against my shoe. He quickly drew it back.

“Windy...” he said.

“What?” she answered.

He scrunched up his face.

“No, nothing. I forgot what I was going to say.”

Mom wiped her hands on her napkin, and started to clear dishes away.

“Really,” Hank said, “leave them for me.”

After that, Mom and I headed up for bed.

That night, I fell into a deep sleep—worn out from the work. It was springtime, and the sharp shoes on the cultivator dug into the moist earth. There was Hank, right over my shoulder.

“Keep your rows straight, boy”, he was saying.

“I’m trying,” I said, “but all the dirt in front of me looks like the same mess. The lines

only appear once we've gone past.”

“No, no, you've got to do it differently.” He put his hand under my chin and tilted it upwards.

“Find a place on the horizon,” he continued, “see, there's that silo in the distance, straight ahead. You keep your eyes on that—don't worry what's right in front of you. If you keep looking at that silo, then your rows are going to be straight”.

I looked back over my shoulder. Something had happened to his face—it was full of deep wrinkles, and worse, most of his thin brown hair had fallen out and was stuck all over the back of my shirt. He looked so different without it, I wasn't even certain who he was any more.

V

Hank was nowhere to be found all morning. Mom and I ate alone. Breakfast, lunch, and then supper. Even Mom was growing concerned. Finally, in the hours before dark, I decided to sneak back out to the shop.

When I got there, the place was vacant. I could hear small birds nattering above me, but there was no other human presence. Without it, the shop felt incomplete, like looking at a frame without a picture inside.

The *Loftschrüw* sat exactly as it did the day before; if Hank had been there, he hadn't made progress. Already dust was settling on the wings.

But then I noticed that there was something different about the Winnebago. It had been pivoted clockwise, hiding the front end from a person over by the *Loftschrüw*. I walked over to investigate.

Coming around the driver's side door, I could see that the hood had been propped up. I took a look around, and, finding nothing, began to hoist myself up onto the front bumper. I gained a foothold and brought myself up to stand. From there, I looked down inside the hood. I blinked. There was a clear view of the cement floor below. The hood was just an empty box. There was nothing left inside.

I heard Hank's voice behind me. Somehow, he had approached without my noticing.

"C'mon Kace. Change of plans," he said. "We're going to see if we can get it to spin."

He walked in from the large door towards the work area. I crawled down from the Winnebago and joined him, not sure if I had any other option.

The Winnebago's V8 engine had been lifted up to the rafters. As Hank pulled on the chain, it dropped—a grotesque marionette, still dripping oil. I watched as he moved it into a frame between the two layers of wings. It looked like he had already modified the angle irons to

be able to hold an engine of that particular size. Once it was set, he hooked it up to the gas tank and finished the remaining adjustments.

Hank looked back to me. "Only one thing left."

The propeller lay on the table like a body waiting for autopsy. Hank walked over and reverently picked up the blade. Taking a deep breath, he turned back to the machine and hoisted the propeller onto the shaft leading from the engine.

Once the blade was attached he stood back and admired his work. While his eyes were pointed in the direction of the blade it was almost as if his spirit had left his body and was wandering around somewhere else.

He looked at me.

"Are you excited? Come on, kid, smile a little! The work of our hands... We turned that blueprint into something real. Like turning a dream into gold!"

Nudging me back a few steps, so that I would be out of the propeller's way, he grabbed the upper blade with his hands.

"Ready? Ten, nine, eight, seven..." he counted. "Three, two, one, blastoff!"

Hank pushed down on the propeller as hard as he could. The blades spun around, but the engine only sputtered. Soon, momentum brought the propeller to a halt. He laughed.

"Outta gas. It's outta gas!"

Still laughing, he walked over to one of the worktables, pulling a jerry can out from somewhere underneath.

"Stay put, Kace. I gotta go fill up this jug."

With that, he left.

I was alone, and darkness was coming outside. In a moment, the shop seemed to grow to an enormous size. My memory told me that there were rafters overhead, holding up the building

and protecting me, but they were lost. I turned on the flashlight.

I wasn't sure what to do. Aside from the cracked cement and those two machines, glowing orange in the torch light, everything around me was indiscernible. The orange light bounced back at me from a thousand jagged edges, each sharp enough to sever fingers. I walked with the flashlight close to my body. I tried to feel its heat, however small, against my heart.

I went over to the edge of the *Loftschriiw* and looked inside the cockpit. I didn't remember the leather on the seat being so brown, so old.

At least fifteen minutes had passed—still no sign of Hank. I crawled over the edge of the cockpit and put my hands on the steering wheel. Even when I turned with all my strength, I couldn't budge the skis.

I thought about going back to the house, but realized I had never walked alone through the woods in the dark—I could see my clothing, my hair, getting caught among the branches. Things would snag, pull back, release. Oak trees trying to climb all over me. Stuffed up, becoming the inside of a trunk filled with clothing. Then, at last, ending up like that horse, hip deep in the small creek. Twisting a leg and drowning in three feet of water—staying put, I thought, was the right thing to do. Besides, I still believed that Hank was going to come back; maybe the gas was kept far away, maybe he got sidetracked.

I started to thump the edge of the machine.

I stopped. Another noise tapped back from deep in the shop, or just outside. Sound moved through the rafters like an electrical storm building up. Somebody, or something, was nearby. A cougar—coming up from the river for food. An owl, just waking up to hunt in the night. An escapee, secretly hiding out on the yard—like the old woman back in Ingelberg, who had gotten out of the care home. They found her twenty miles away trying to clean herself in somebody's birdbath.

I cowered, trying to hide myself in the cockpit. I may have started to cry. Fumbling around, I flipped off the flashlight switch.

“Hello? Are you here?” A voice called, far away and then closer. “Why are you hiding?”

I poked my head back up. There was Mom—her silhouette, at least—standing in the frame of one of the large doors.

“Kace?”

I turned the flashlight back on and pointed it towards her.

“Come here, come here. Why are you playing around in that old thing?”

I crawled out of the *Loftschriuw* and ran towards her. She bent down.

“I thought I'd find you here,” she said. “Any sign of Hank? Here, give me the flashlight.”

Taking it from me, she pointed the light around the shop. It fell on the Winnebago.

“Oh, there it is! Come show me what you've been working on.”

She pushed me forward. I didn't move.

“Hey there, don't you want me to see?”

Leaving me in my place, she walked towards the motor home by herself.

“Why aren't there any tools here?” She scampered closer. Close enough to see under the hood.

“Where is the engine? I should be seeing an engine! All the parts! Why is there nothing?!”

Mom turned back towards me and yelled.

“And where in the hell is Hank?!”

She grabbed me and told me to come outside.

It was humid, and there was no breeze, even though dusk had fallen. As we approached the house, I noticed the light was on in our upstairs room. I thought I must have forgot to turn it

off when I left.

We climbed up the grassy slope leading up to the old summer kitchen. Mom yanked back the door and we entered the house.

“Go on up ahead,” she told me, “there’s something I have to take care of first.” She headed into the entrance while I walked towards our staircase.

I ran up the first few steps quickly. But as I neared the top, I started to hear a soft noise, a shuffling. Then—just as strange—the occasional creak of a floor joist. The TV was not on. I crept, rolling my feet from side to side to dampen the sound.

I got near enough to the top to put my fingers over the edge. I waited, my panting growing louder than the noises I strained to hear.

Finally, not able to take it any longer, I peeked up. The light coming from the far bedroom gleamed off of the layer of dust on the hardwood floor at my eye level. There, in the bedroom, I saw Hank’s back. He was leaning over the bed.

Not realizing what he could be doing, I clambered up to the top of the stairs, then started to cross the floor of the smoking chamber towards the bedroom.

I reached the door, and then—without sizing up the situation—walked in.

Hank whirled around. His face went pale. I had never seen him like it before. He was wearing a black hat with a wide brim on his head. Down below, he was dressed in navy cloth overalls, and he had his long-sleeved white button up shirt beneath. He wasn’t wearing any socks.

I took a step back.

It was then I noticed the camera equipment set up around the bed. Three cameras—old-fashioned accordion style cameras—mounted on tripods, with the long brown sheets draping over the back of each of them.

Hank took a step towards me, flustered, trying to guess how much I knew and how much I didn't know or, rather, how much he needed to explain to get me to leave.

But as he moved, I could see behind him onto the bed. There, lying atop the quilt that the old horse-lady had made, were flower petals. Hundreds of them, lilies and yellow flowers, every one hand plucked from around the yard. And there, at the foot of the bed, was another set of clothes, equally matched. They were laid out exactly like a human body, from head to toe, except no one was in them: a black kerchief, a long egg-white dress with a faded floral design, and a pair of navy knee-high socks.

"Shoe!" Hank said. "Get out! Go off and work somewhere by yourself for awhile."

I didn't know how mad he was. I shuffled backwards towards the stairs, keeping an eye on his face. It had turned dark red, a moon during a lunar eclipse. And then I heard the door open at the bottom of the stairs below.

I wanted to run—remove myself from the scene—or somehow try to spread myself like wax over the floorboards. But Mom was too quick, already mounting the stairs.

Hank coughed. "Hey, Win; is that you?"

"Hank?" Mom called, still out of sight. "What are you doing up there?!"

"Just getting somethin' ready," he said, "maybe wait there for a minute. Right there."

I could hear her take a few more steps. Then, like the women in the box at the magic show, she appeared above the stair-line—just her head—the other half of her was still hidden down below.

She took a look around. There we were, standing in the bulb-less smoke room, Hank perched over me in his dark overalls and hat.

"Hank! What—"

"It's dress up," Hank said, "just playing around, like we used to when we were kids."

I was pinned between her and Hank.

"I thought you might enjoy a little make-pretend," he said, "I had the itch."

I took a step back, sliding up against the arched part of the wall.

In an instant, Mom had jumped up the steps and closed the distance between them.

Before Hank could react, she shoved him, right between the suspenders. He stumbled backwards a step.

"Liar!" she shrieked.

"What's this about?" he retorted. "I've done nothing but good for you!"

She kept going. "How COULD you?!"

Before Hank could step back again, Windy clawed out for his hair. Her fingers stuck. She grabbed onto a piece and twirled, spinning it up like yarn being put back onto a spool. Hank was the one who pulled back. The clump of hair ripped off, jerking his neck sideways. Windy was left holding a bouquet of split ends.

Before she must have realized the consequence of her actions, she was lunging at Hank again.

"You ass!" yelled Windy, slapping him on his stubbled face. "You ass! You ass!" She slapped him two more times.

"I've seen it!" she said. "It's all out now! What are you trying to do to me?"

"A present... supposed to be a surprise!" he said. "That was Dad's last gift to you. I was going to fix it up. Make it drive again. You remember it, don't you? That cockpit was the same one that brought you here. Happy times? I've been thinking, what were the happy times, you know... And I thought of those days, before it got screwed up."

Mom pushed by him and walked into the bedroom. She knocked one of the cameras over against the wall. Going to one side of the bed, she bent down and grabbed it right under the

frame.

“What are you doing?” Hank asked.

She pulled up, lifting the bed up at an angle. The flower petals slid off, then the mattress followed. It thudded, face down, beside the toy chest. The bed was now a simple frame of wood and a cross-section of wires.

“What gave you this idea, Hank? You think that just because I had a thing for your brother that it would transfer over to you?”

Hank pointed at her. “You don't bring him into this, Windy. It's you that got him jumbled up in the first place. There were things you could have done that would have made it no problem at all, not to the public sight. You knew that getting pregnant without that ring is a sin like no other around here. Do you realize how bad that looked for him? He was going into the ministry!”

“I will not be guilty for his death, Hank. Don't you try to make me.”

She turned to the chest of drawers and started flinging clothes out onto the floor.

Grabbing the suitcase, she threw an armful of underwear inside.

“What are you doing, Windy?” Hank asked.

Mom didn't look up—just kept piling things in the suitcase.

“Windy, I asked you a question.”

She was still silent, focussed on her hands.

“Fine. I'm going downstairs. You can talk to me when you're ready.”

He spun around, brushing my shoulder on the way to the staircase. He clunked his way down. A chair skidded in the kitchen, and there was a bump on the table.

“Here, Kace.” Mom said, “Help me out, quick.”

Together, we gathered up the rest of the things we had brought into the house. Mom zipped up the suitcase.

"Let's go," she whispered.

We walked into the smoke room. Something clattered somewhere downstairs. It was silent for a second, then we heard his voice.

"Dinner time! It's time for dinner! Ha, ha."

Mom looked at me.

"Whatever you want, as long as it's goose! We'll do it buffet style. Come on! Grab a plate. Pick one up right before you go. No dirties; we've got to keep it clean. Keep it clean! You see something you like, just toss it on your plate, but don't you take more than you can handle. Don't wanna throw nothin' out! It's in your plate, you choke it down. That's the rules! Sounds good? Come get it; it's still hot! Won't be hot for long!"

"What's he doing?" Mom asked. I walked over to the smoke shaft. Mom, seeing my plan, followed. We both got down on our hands and knees. We took turns sticking our heads in the vent to see what Hank was doing in the kitchen.

"Windy, Windy, Windy..." he said. He was leaning back in his chair with his feet on the kitchen table. The front two chair legs were a few inches above the ground.

"You've come, and now you're going to blow away. A little poof. A dandelion seed. Dandy lion! Dandy, dandy, dandy. Yankee doodle! Fine and dandy! Dandie Dinmont!"

He reached into his back pocket, squeezing his hand between himself and the chair, and pulled out his brown tube of Chap Stick. He laughed. Boots still on the table, he began to spread the balm over his lips. He kept adding coat after coat until I'm sure he was only applying the dry

edges of the container.

“When you think back, haha,” he laughed, “Correction—when you *look* back, you’ll realize what you left behind. I am your glasses, Windy D.—your big old specs—yes I am!”

Mom tugged me back out of the hole. She wanted to see it for herself.

“This is it. You could have had the life. Pshew! We could have built it together, nice and proper. Your space, my space. The yard’s big enough for two. Plus children. Some children to pass it all down to some day. Leave behind a legacy. Deep down, you want it, too. A quiet, respectable life!”

The chair legs clicked down against the floor, followed by the sound of his heels.

“Windy?”

He waited. One. Two. Three. All the way up until ten. Then he gave the table a little shove. Mom said it moved back towards the sink a couple of inches. Then she saw him walk out of the kitchen.

She pulled her head back from the vent. Her red hair was dusted with soot.

“Now’s our chance,” she said. We picked up the suitcases and headed for the stairs. Mom climbed down first, in case I’d fall. The hallway was clear. In seconds, we were in the entrance. We left the house, door swinging open, and scuttled down the row of steps. It was dark. All the humidity had been sucked away, and the air was cold, winter-like.

Halfway down the flight, a voice called out behind us.

“Where are you going?”

We looked back. There, on the porch, was Hank, sitting on the lone stool. We had passed by him without even noticing.

Reaching into her sock, Mom pulled out a key. "I'm taking the Ford," she said.

Hank brought his hands together in one definitive clap.

We ran the rest of the way down the hill. The blue truck was waiting for us at the bottom.

It started just fine.

"Buckle up," Mom told me. I wasn't going to argue. She turned on the headlights.

Mom backed up, spinning the wheel two times around so that we would line up with the road when she put it back into drive.

As we gained some ground, I looked back up at the house.

I reached forward, trying to roll the window down.

"Hands off!" Mom yelled, "don't you touch that crank!" I heard her clunk the shift-stick over. She floored the accelerator.

Hank's hand came up, the longest five fingers I've ever seen. He was waving at us.

Ten yards. Twenty. Thirty. At forty, he was already becoming smaller. By the time we reached the end of the driveway, he had wasted away to nothing.

The rain started as soon as we were through the shelterbelt. The wipers were going at full speed, but the rain always fell faster.

I felt my eyes growing heavy. The rain was hitting the roof hard. It may have been turning into hail.

I fell asleep. My head was nestled between the seatbelt and the cold window.

When I woke up, we were driving through Saskatchewan. The farmers were cutting sunflowers, probably got started as soon as the dew dried up. The yellow haze of morning was still in the air. I watched their reels circle, every spin discovering more of the true fields.

That was a new beginning for us. We drove until we reached the mountains. Mom found a job as a waitress at a ski lodge. I entered public school. We bought a little house, all our own. A bungalow, made to look like a log cabin. So kept away from things on the side of a hill that it could only be reached with a trucking road.

I wonder how much she thought of Hank and the old place after that—whether that was something you could ever get out of your mind. It was never brought up.

And she died—less than six months ago, in the coldest part of the year. There was a stroke another year before that; shouldn't have happened at her age. She was silent, right during that time talking would have been so important. Those of us who were close to her would sit by her bed, day after day, asking her questions that didn't need answers or telling her stories where the facts didn't matter.

We buried her on that mountain where Mom and I spent those many years. We placed the coffin in a shallow old mineshaft nearby. After the words were spoken, I lit a fuse. We left the tunnel and watched as the dust rolled out from the inside. That was the end of it. It might have been easier knowing she was there with someone else to keep her company: a mother, a father, or someone that she loved. But they had all left many years before her.

Maybe Hank had heard of her death when he sent the picture in the mail. Or was she still a young woman, just starting to figure things out? It is hard to tell one winter from another. The snow comes and soon everything is underneath its coat. But there, in that picture taken on some unknown main street, Hank found a way to keep from sinking in. He was sitting in the *Loftschriuw*, crouching so that his face could be seen underneath the propeller's blur. The whole machine shone with fresh paint. Underneath its outspread wings, a dozen adults and children looked on with wonder.

Afterword

“School days, school days...” begins an article I clipped out of a rural newspaper several years ago. In the article, the writer goes back to the one-room school where he received his childhood education. He finds it abandoned and in a state of ruin. Yet his return brings back pleasant memories of 1st Grade readers, the smell of chalk, and somehow even the leather strap. I inexplicably find myself nodding along despite growing up decades removed from such a schoolhouse experience.

“School days, school days...”: an incantation. The words, repeated, become a refrain and turn what follows into a ballad. Objects that were once emblems of rote learning and punishment are rendered beautiful through the song's inherent melancholy that has been emphasized by the use of ellipses.

The words, repeated, recall the remembering process: a past event is revisited in the present. In the article, this order is confused with the physical return of the narrator to the site of his early memories. Two different time periods of the same place are juxtaposed and found to be different. This difference, caused by what is lost in the rift between times, is what makes the narrator experience nostalgia.

In The Loftschrw, all of the three main characters experience a similar feeling of nostalgia. Windy finds nostalgic emotion called up when she sees beehives (6) and thinks of a childhood snowmobile trip (26). Hank expresses nostalgia when he returns to his father's old workshop. He tells Kace, “When I was about your age, I would climb in those trees over there and watch the combine machines roll out through those big doors in front [...] We always tried to imagine where they would end up. Those places, like Illinois or even Alberta, seemed like different worlds. That was what prairie boys dreamed of back then; that was our science fiction”

(34).

But despite the ease of producing such examples (in both fact and fiction), it is hard to find a precise understanding of what nostalgia actually is. Aaron Santesso describes it as “a word used in a remarkable number of ways, with a startling range of objects: it has become a kind of catchall term for all forms of sentimental longing or regret” (15). According to Santesso, many of our examples of nostalgia have distorted the definition of the word in common practice. “And yet”, he continues, “There are some obvious rules and expectations. It is atypical, for example, to encounter a depiction of nostalgia for middle age; childhood is the usual object of nostalgia. Nostalgia is commonly nationalized: Americans feel nostalgia for their own Old West rather than the western settlement periods of Canada or Brazil, for example” (15).

Nostalgia has been treated with disdain for most of the three hundred years that have passed since it was named. Although it is no longer seen as an illness (as it was in its first century), things associated with nostalgia are still subject to ethical and aesthetical questions. Should people and governments be allowed to pursue nostalgic projects? Can someone be both nostalgic and truthful? Is it ethically responsible to write a nostalgic text in a post World-War age?

To answer these questions, nostalgia must be treated as a complicated desire instead of a simple feeling that one gets in a 50s diner. It begins with angst upon recognition of the disparity between physical reality and a hypothetical state in one's imagination. But nostalgia does not end with this melancholy. It is followed with a desire to restore what has gone missing or to realize an imagined utopia. This desire can lead to innocuous actions, like collecting vintage toys. But it can also result in some of nostalgia's most devastating forms: as grounds for oppression and even genocide. However, these possible consequences should not condemn nostalgia as a whole. Nostalgia is a natural part of the remembering process and can be a positive force of change and

creativity if it is used ethically.

I. Nostalgic Angst

In 1688, when Johannes Hofer first christened 'nostalgia' and treated it as a mental illness, the word was an extension of the Swiss-German *heimweh*: a mourning over separation from home (Hollander, 33). A vestige of this concept still survives in our English word 'homesick'.

'Homesickness' is a clear parallel to nostalgic angst. In Hofer's use of the word in his treatise, "De Nostalggia oder Heimwehe", 'nostalgia' is described as having a clear and concrete emotional object. This object is the home: desired, but not present. One cannot be homesick at home. The first nostalgics experienced the pain of *heimweh* acutely. Linda Austin writes, "In Johannes Hofer's dissertation of 1688 [...] the typical sufferer was from a rural region often separated from an urban center by forbidding terrain, and the disease coincided with leaving these isolated and often socially backward pockets" (6). In moving away from the isolated areas of their home, the 'sufferers' found a new isolation: they could not get back.

Immanuel Kant, analyzing the same case of Swiss soldiers one hundred years after Hofer, writes,

The *homesickness* that seizes them when they are transferred to other lands is the result of a longing for the places where they enjoyed the very simple pleasures of life - aroused by the recollection of images of the carefree life and neighborly company in their early years. For later, after they visit these same places, they are greatly disappointed in their expectations and thus also find their homesickness cured. To be sure, they think that this is because everything there has changed a great deal, but in fact it is because they cannot bring back their youth there (71).

Curiously, Kant begins the passage by referring to nostalgia with the Hoferian meaning of homesickness. However, a subtle change occurs over the course of his short meditation. By the

end, Kant recognizes that the nostalgics are not looking to return to a piece of land: they want to return to a different time. For Kant, the slippage between the two words may not have been significant; in his opinion, time and space were the two lenses through which all humans viewed the world.

No longer restricted to geographical locations, nostalgia in the 18th century expanded to include the longing for places as abstract and idyllic as the Garden of Eden or the Rousseauian State of Nature (Santesso, 183). These places were not remote physically, like early Switzerland, but temporally: lost due to moral or societal failings. But by the late 18th century, time had almost universally supplanted home as the object of nostalgia. John Hollander writes, “We designate by it ['nostalgia'] not literal 'homesickness' but a strange and perhaps not quite legitimate extension thereof, a longing for a time and not for a place” (33).

In this way, the lost utopias serve as examples of the loss of both time and space. In addition, they could stand as symbols for the transformation from innocence to experience that consumed the Romantic poets. When Wordsworth writes, “There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,/ The earth, and every common sight,/ To me did seem/ Apparelled in celestial light,/ The glory and the freshness of a dream./ It is not now as it hath been of yore;--/ Turn wheresoe'er I may,/ By night or day,/ The things which I have seen I now can see no more,” he is expressing nostalgia by wanting to return to an earlier time (“Ode”, 1). But despite the differences between longing for a place and longing for a time, both cases still require a disparity between actuality and the imagination. If Wordsworth still saw the earth “apparelled in celestial light”, there would be no cause to mourn as he does.

This disparity is eloquently summarized by Kant, who writes, “Because the power of imagination is richer and more fruitful in representations than sense, when a passion appears on the scene the power of imagination is more enlivened through the absence of the object than by

its presence. This is evident when something happens that recalls the representation of an object to the mind again, which for a while seemed to be erased through distractions” (Anthropology, 73). Kant, writing hundreds of years before Derridian postmodernism, argues that the imagination is most strongly aroused by absence. However, unlike Derrida's claim that there is nothing outside of the text¹, Kant's nostalgic angst is the result of an extra-textual, physical lack that is experienced before it is interpreted. To be considered nostalgic, the imagination must have a vision that surpasses the current physical condition in some way.

As such, nostalgia bears a fascinating relationship with time: it is a felt lack in the present that results from looking backwards, which produces a desire to see a return to this “past” in the future. But this is not a paradox. In fact, Sigmund Freud writes that a similar temporal element is found in all wish-making:

The relation of a phantasy to time is in general very important. We may say that it hovers, as it were, between three times—the three moments of time which our ideation involves. Mental work is linked to some current impression, some provoking occasion in the present which has been able to arouse one of the subject's major wishes. From there it harks back to a memory of an earlier experience (usually an infantile one) in which this wish was fulfilled; and it now creates a situation relating to the future which represents a fulfillment of the wish. What it thus creates is a day-dream or phantasy, which carries about it traces of its origin from the occasion which provoked it and from the memory. Thus past, present, and future are strung together, as it were, on the thread of the wish that

1 Derrida, Jacques. Of Grammatology, trans. G. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 158.

runs through them (“Creative Writers and Daydreaming”, 38).

According to Freud, our present fantasies are repetitions of desires that were once fulfilled during our childhood. Svetlana Boym agrees, describing nostalgia as “a yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams” (xv).

The main storyline in The Loftschruw is Kace's retelling of a childhood event. The narrator is introduced in a state where he is literally turned around, “looking out the RV's rear window” (1). It holds the promise of every memoir: to rediscover those things that have been, as Kant says, “erased through distractions”. In The Loftschruw, personal truth has been obscured through a long period of silence by Kace's parents or guardians. Facts have been covered up like dust covers the road, and when the narrative finally begins, it does so through “yellow domes of cloud” (1). This dream-state recalls the Freudian idea that writing is linked to daydreaming. For memoir writers, the return to childhood pleasures is almost unavoidable.

But Freud's hypothesis can provide insight into nostalgia theory without requiring a full adoption of his psychoanalytic theory. Indeed, if we hold to the Freudian view of the psychological unconscious and repression, nostalgia can only be seen as a mental disorder. Not surprisingly, this negative view has been taken towards nostalgia for most of its history. Adam Muller writes,

In the eighteenth century, as medical science and the diseases it aimed to treat began to be formally systematized, and as more and more people fell victim to nostalgia as a result of the massive residential disruptions coincident with the rise of an increasingly labor-starved Industrial Revolution, François Boissier de la Croix Sauvages (1706–1767) enlarged nostalgia's terms of reference and placed it alongside what he termed *Les Bizareries* or *Les Morosités*, the derangements of the desires, rather than locating it along with melancholia in the category occupied

by more traditional forms of madness (748).

Seen as a “derangement of the desires”, nostalgia becomes a feeling that must be repressed. But to repress nostalgia is to repress a seemingly essential element of our humanity. We are time-perceivers and require the past to find our identities.

In fact, recent psychological research indicates that nostalgic pleasure is a natural by-product of the act of remembering. Jason Leboe and Tamara Ansons, in an article entitled “On Misattributing Good Remembering to a Happy Past: An Investigation into the Cognitive Roots of Nostalgia”, suggest that nostalgic pleasure is generated by a natural bodily reward system used for routine recall:

Inspired by the source attribution approach to human memory (Jacoby, Kelley, & Dywan, 1989; Whittlesea, 1997), we propose that the process of remembering itself provides a possible mechanism for leading people to experience their past as more positive than it was. This approach differs from previous accounts of nostalgia, which have ranged from treating the phenomenon as a symptom or category of mental disorder (Kaplan, 1987) to the proposal that such experiences serve an ego-protective function (Davis, 1979; Sedikides, Wildschut, & Baden, 2004). In our view, nostalgia is not psychopathological and may serve no specific purpose. Instead, we suspect it can occur as a consequence of quite ordinary memory processes (607).

Whether we experience pleasure from memory recall or if our memories simply recall pleasant experiences more easily, we have undeniably nostalgic bodies.

Even for Johannes Hofer's first nostalgic patients, no clear division between nostalgia and the body could be found. Linda Austin writes, “Hofer gives an internal picture of the mind seized by the *idee fixe*. 'Wherefore . . . the spirits, busied excessively in the brain, cannot flow with

sufficient supply and proper vigor through the invisible tubes of the nerves to all parts, cannot help the natural actions of those.' Their nerve channels blocked and dammed up, sufferers evinced 'stupidity of the mind—attending to nothing hardly, other than an idea of the Fatherland'"

(7). Hofer viewed his nostalgic patients as men who internalized their isolation from the homeland until they physiologically cut off their motor system from the part of the brain obsessed with longing. Ultimately, their political immobility was manifested physically in their bodies.

Ironically, our current neuroscientific view of the brain as an extension of the rest of our bodies (as opposed to something categorically distinct) finds its predecessor in the Romantic-era psychophysiology that strongly influenced one branch of nostalgia theory. In Nostalgia in Transition: 1780-1917, Linda Austin argues that modern nostalgia must be viewed according to its psychophysiological roots:

In taking up long suppressed materialist ideas to locate a memory beyond consciousness in the body's motor-sensory mechanisms, psychophysiology reconfigured the traditional dualism between mind (or soul) and body as a split between a conscious custodian of identity and an unconscious mind coursed by neurophysiological forces. . . Whereas Freud hinged unconscious memory on repression, psychophysicologists portrayed unconscious memory as an acquired repetitiveness of nervous action that control both sensory and motor faculties" (19-21).

According to Austin, 18th and 19th century psychophysicologists, like William Benjamin Carpenter and George Henry Lewes, "located memory not in the mind but in the spinal chord and had offered a new understanding of the human being's physical connection to the past" (16).

Traces of this philosophy carried through until the end of the Victorian era, and can be

found in the philosophical work of Henri Bergson as well as the literature of writers like Marcel Proust, who included a strong physical component in his work on memory. In a particular sequence at the start of a Remembrance of Things Past, the narrator says,

My body, still too heavy with sleep to move, would endeavour to construe from the pattern of its tiredness the position of its various limbs, in order to deduce therefrom the direction of the wall, the location of the furniture, to piece together and give a name to the house in which it lay. Its memory, the composite memory of its ribs, its knees, its shoulder-blades, offered it a whole series of rooms in which it had at one time or another slept, while the unseen walls, shifting and adapting themselves to the shape of each successive room that it remembered, whirled round it in the dark (6).

Here, memory and the body are almost inseparable. Ribs, knees, and shoulder blades, not the brain, are responsible for the narrator's memory. The physical body acts as a compass to guide memory amidst the spinning walls; the narrator believes they will even guide him to recall the correct name of the building.

In The Loftschruf, there is a strong connection between the characters' bodies and their ability to remember their past and identity. For Kace, this is most clearly demonstrated by a person's hair. Hair, like identity, has roots. Hair, like memory, can be lost. At the beginning of the text, Kace is not able to tell the date of the photograph he received in the mail because a hood is obscuring Hank's hair. Later, this symbol is revisited in a dream. In it, Hank acts as a father figure, guiding Kace to make straight lines on a field. However, the identity of the father figure comes into question by the dream's end. Kace says, "I looked back over my shoulder. Something had happened to his face—it was full of deep wrinkles, and worse, most of his thin brown hair had fallen out and was stuck all over the back of my shirt. He looked so different without it, I

wasn't even certain who he was any more" (54). Hank, without hair, takes on the appearance of his father, Klaas, the patriarch who experienced debilitating memory loss at the end of his life.

The bodies of the female characters display contrasting traits. Kace sees Windy as having "downy hairs on her face that women never seem to lose" (47). In the same scene, Kace is also reminded of Aunt Hedy, who suffered from a lordic curvature of the spine. The spine, the seat of memory for the physiopsychologists, is her essential feature that cannot fall out like hair. But although she is called "Aunt", Hedy died as a child and thus cannot inhabit a straightforward temporal category. She is both old and not old. Windy asks Hank, "You ever wonder what life would have been like for Aunt Hedy? Being so young and not able to get around. Knowing that the world wasn't made for you. But it's something beautiful, too, not living long enough to realize that new set of grown-up problems. An eternal innocence" (48).

But there is something uncomfortable in Windy's use of Aunt Hedy as a symbol for eternal innocence. Her statement does not fully comprehend the way life must have been for a child with a crippling physical illness, and furthermore transforms the child's pain into an example of beauty. Windy has created a story based on sentiment and has thus misused nostalgic desire.

II. Nostalgic Acts

For most of nostalgia's history, literary nostalgia was used to evoke positive feelings or depict Utopias. Early nostalgics, like the well-known case of Friedrich Schiller's patient Grammont, were prescribed a cure that involved walking in a pastoral setting akin to Wordsworth's "meadows, groves, and streams" at the start of his Immortality Ode. According to Linda Austin, "The idea of the countryside as the therapeutic arena of temporary and simulated freedom was based on a literary tradition, specifically the view of pastoral chiefly derived from Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle's "Discours sur la nature de l'églogue" (1688). In this theory,

the pastoral became the realm of an imagined past, a 'demi-vrai'" (9).

The problem with the production of these 'demi-vrai's is not related to their truth values. Instead, it is the availability of pre-made tropes that undermine the sincerity in texts that utilize nostalgic elements. Svetlana Boym writes, "The problem with prefabricated nostalgia is that it does not help us to deal with the future. Creative nostalgia reveals the fantasies of the age, and it is in those fantasies and potentialities that the future is born. One is nostalgic not for the past the way it was, but for the past the way it could have been. It is this past perfect that one strives to realize in the future" (351).

Svetlana Boym argues that there are two distinct kinds of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. Her definition condemns restorative nostalgia's attempt to physically recreate a spatio-temporal ideal, while maintaining the value of reflective nostalgia, which she describes as "a form of deep mourning that performs a labor of grief both through pondering pain and through play that points to the future" (55). An appropriate use of nostalgia (like Boym's "reflective nostalgia") believes in an objective past, but acknowledges that humans interpret this past subjectively through our perceptions and imperfect memories.

This responsible nostalgia therefore requires an appropriate theory of history. David Williams sees this new historical approach as the center of art in his essay "After Post-Modernism". He says, "Becoming one's own ancestor: the heart of the story. Not to enclose the world inside the self, but to recreate the whole work of time. Making our own connections in the writing and the reading. The family tree branching into the world tree. Post-apocalypse." (283-4).

In The Loftschruw, Kace and Windy's return is guided by the posts that line the road, "Coming out of the swamp lands, marking out ground solid enough for a cart to pass over. Just follow that line and you could keep from ending up waist-deep in cattails" (5). These markers, part of the Post Road, tie the story into a larger historical narrative. Behind the personal account

in the story is the communal account of the Mennonite people. But this history is partially obscured: Windy and Kace find the community in a state of abandonment, “The last letters had vanished, just like most of the people. Believe it or not, a few years after its initial construction, Neuhorst was one of the most important towns in the West Reserve; 22 family homes were listed in the 1880 census of the place” (6).

The words missing on the town's sign also reflect gaps in personal memory. In his memoir, Speak Memory, Vladimir Nabokov writes, “The disintegrating process continues still, in a different sense, for when, nowadays, I attempt to follow in memory the winding paths from one given point to another, I notice with alarm that there are many gaps, due to oblivion or ignorance, akin to the terra-incognita blanks map makers of old used to call “sleeping beauties” (136). Nabokov uses the simile of the partially blank map to describe memory. Memory, therefore, is not an end in itself, but a guide used to explore identity or history. Nabokov recognizes that memory always has an element of imperfection. It is either a fragment or a palimpsest, constantly written over by the stream of new events.

Current psychological studies suggest that many of our actions can be completed without conscious thought. These are moments of automation are referred to as “behavioral scripting”. Our bodies operate using behavioral scripts whenever we act according to established routines: when walking, for example, moving food into our mouths to eat, or turning the light switch on when we enter a room.

Interestingly, a similar belief is found in Virginia Woolf's early 20th century work, Moments of Being. In the text, the narrator begins telling a traumatic story of how her cousin violated her prepubescent body, but interrupts it in order to discuss a concept that she calls a “moment of non-being”. She says,

Every day includes much more non-being than being. [...] I have already forgotten

what Leonard and I talked about at lunch; and at tea; although it was a good day the goodness was embedded in a kind of nondescript cotton wool. One walks, eats, sees things, deals with what has to be done; the broken vacuum cleaner; ordering dinner; writing orders to Mabel; washing; cooking dinner; bookbinding. When it is a bad day the proportion of non-being is much larger. I had a slight temperature last week; almost the whole day was non-being. The real novelist can somehow convey both sorts of being. [...] As a child then, my days, just as they do now, contained a large proportion of this cotton wool, this non-being (2332).

Here, Woolf suggests that writing and, indirectly, personal identity, are composed of both moments of being and non-being. Interestingly, the moments that make up the largest portion of our time are the ones that are most resistant to memory. Therefore, any action that attempts to satisfy the nostalgic desire must find some way to fill in these gaps.

Aaron Santesso calls the method of filling in these gaps through story-telling “literary nostalgia”. He writes, “Nicholas Dames and others have drawn attention to the irony that nostalgia is a practice of forgetting; that is, a nostalgic memory is the result of forgetting negative aspects of an experience. But literary nostalgia, particularly as we see it practiced in the eighteenth century, is also a practice of remembering: both remembering earlier literary examples and ideas of nostalgia, in order to express an experience in a familiar and accessible way, and remembering one that is nostalgic, in order to separate one’s self from the emotion and thus control and channel it” (22).

When physical memory is not possible, nostalgic writers may substitute literary memory. The images produced through literary memory must be able to fulfill the nostalgic longing and at the same time account for past memory deficiencies. A balance must be struck between realism and idealism. According to Santesso, this can be accomplished by utilizing “literary nostalgia”, a

set of tropes that (hopefully) convey a universal longing.

Kace utilizes a certain “literary nostalgia” as he tells the story of The Loftschruf. On the farm, a place sheltered from the dust and wind of the outside world, the modern-day characters are forced into the roles of early Canadian literary pioneers. Hank, though trained as a pseudo-bohemian artist, decides to raise geese in order to adopt a self-sufficient lifestyle. And he moves closer still to being a literary pioneer like Frederick Grove's Niels Lindstedt when he reconstructs the Loftschruf. Like the pioneer who builds his yard and tools from materials available on-site, Hank's work is *bricolage*. The Loftschruf's wings are covered in canvas “that Klaas had been using to cover his grain-truck's box” (48). The engine is taken out of the Winnebago. And the machine's propeller may have been taken from a World War I fighter plane.

It is this deepening literary nostalgia that leads to the novella's climactic scene in the “loft” of the old house. Hank's desire manifests itself in the act of laying out a set of clothes for Windy: “They were laid out exactly like a human body, from head to toe, except no-one was in them: a black kerchief, a long egg-white dress with a faded floral design, and a pair of navy knee-high socks” (61). This is the clothing of the Old Order Mennonite, with an emphasis on simplicity and plainness. In this moment, the puritanical becomes sexualized and the children's dress-up scene gets warped into something frightfully tainted by experience.

Hank, it could be argued, is The Loftschruf's tragic hero or anti-hero. His actions, though they are driven by the same nostalgic angst that caused Windy to return and Kace to tell the Loftschruf's story, are ultimately responsible for breaking up the makeshift family he desired. His fault lies, perhaps, in Svetlana Boym's distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia. Hank's attempt to restore the Loftschruf may be a doomed attempt to realize an ideal in an unideal reality. But perhaps Boym herself draws too arbitrary a distinction. What is wrong about trying to recreate a lost utopia, like Thoreau attempted in Walden? And would we accept

someone who wrote nostalgically about the Nazi state, even if they had no plans to bring it about again?

In the end of the novella, an earlier order is restored. The vulnerable mother and son successfully flee the farm and the struggling inventor is photographed in his father's machine. However, there are things that have changed. Kace and Windy have swapped their motor home for Hank's truck, and Hank's potential family has been replaced with nameless people in a nameless town.

There is no easy moral to the story. All nostalgia, when acted upon, has consequences. And yet there is no clear axiom of cause and effect. But perhaps things are best that way. There is something wonderfully human about a Utopian dream. There is something every child loves in a story that took place long, long ago...

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