
POETRY | SPRING-SUMMER 2025

Our Current Journey Through Cosmic Zephyrs

By Woods Nash

With boarding pass poised in the app, off I go
to check on dad. Mom's back in the hospital.
Post-op, his knee braced for weeks, it's my turn
to nurse dad as he once sponged toddler me. A circle,
some say, is eternal, but each pen must pick
a place to begin. A newborn in 28C won't
stop wailing. Rightly so. Surely we all should
totally freak, seven miles of mostly empty
beneath, but Speed's on our seatback screens,
a bomb's tick needs detoxing, and what
oh what will Keanu do? Too long
since we saw each other nude, dad and me.
Sehnsucht's a walnut in my stomach
for my lost Kentucky home. Old man,
sings the rental sedan, I'm a lot like you were.
And like you I'll someday be. OK, but
really? Belief tends to play hide-and-seek
behind more comfortable furniture. The next song
reminds me I have to fight for my right
to parody. In the hallway, dad shoulders the weight
of his metal walker. He grimaces through
each needling pain. Tell me, if teeth were to fall
in Boone National Forest, and no one
was around to fear them, would the hunter still
release the hounds? While I season
red potatoes, dad marinates slabs of beef.
He updates me on his urn business.
He pays a Mennonite man in Marrowbone
to carve them from reclaimed barnwood.
The next model in the works: a miniature
bourbon barrel. Dad asks me to craft
a slogan. You Urned This, I crack. Or,
I quip, The Nashes Can Cap Your Ashes.
Which smacks faintly of threat? Yes,
and dad digs it. For dinner, our gin's infringed
with excess tonic, but his ribeye steaks
are sublime. Later, dad showers, then waits
on the bathmat for me to dry his calves and feet.
Mottled skin so papery. Toenails gnarled

and tawny. On the bed's edge, we wrap
elastic bandage around his rebuilt knee. Replace
the brace. Button his PJs. We calibrate the shifting
physics of bridge and abyss. Dad doesn't need
much. Company more than anything. Goodnight,
we say. Night. Once he's asleep, I wander out
in the wobbly dark. A basketball rots
in magnolia leaves. From somewhere,
the gentlest wind. Wings in to vanish
like a moth. In the shed, the cobwebbed bulb
shows a broken mower, orange cord, dead
roaches. In the corner leans a cedar stick
with a pocketknife strapped to one end. Hunh.
A makeshift lance or javelin? But also,
crucially: why? To fend off attacks
from rabid raccoons? To spearfish perhaps
in the musty attic? The cosmos shrugs
and sighs. Time to go. But before I close
the door, I spot a length of rope scaling
the wall, reaching up and out a cracked window.
Ah, this much I recognize: it's for the gutting
tug-of-war with the black hole.

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