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Three Poems

By Michael Estabrook

Serious Sensory Overload: another fun summer vacation at the beach

Dave's on his laptop at the dining room table,
drinking both a glass of white wine and a Coors Lite.
He's explaining to Chris how their friends recently started
a business renting water sports equipment to summer renters.

Robin's in turmoil trying to figure out when
to start the grill to cook the fish for dinner.

The 7-year-old is tickling the 6-month old
so hard I fear she'll crack her sternum.

The 5-year-old is yelling and jumping all over the place
like a demented monkey punching his stuffed pig, "Piggy."

The 3-year-old is carrying around a fistful of sliced chicken
dropping most of it on the floor behind her.

Michelle is eating pretzels trying to text (I think)
her parents to keep them informed
on their vacation activities and timeline.

Laura is still glazed over due to the Dramamine
she needed to take to avoid getting sick
on the boat ride we took around Hyannis Harbor.

And Pat (the mother and grandmother, and –
as if happens – my wife, is flitting from room to room
offering advice and guidance, finally stopping
for a moment, lighting like an excited butterfly
on the sofa to ascertain the weather outlook
for tomorrow's festivities.

And me – "I'm undergoing serious sensory overload,"
I exclaim to my wife, trying to catch my breath.
"If I had Bobby's revolver
I'd use it on myself right now."
(Bobby's an old friend from high school,
who killed himself a year ago, out of despair and desolation.)
"I love it," she chirps and yells something or other
to Laura who's begun setting the table for dinner.

"I married you anyway."

She reminded me again (in jest)
of my reaction when I first saw her
in a bathing suit –
she wasn't heavy or unpleasant to look at

in any way (she was in fact stunning),
her legs simply looked different
than what I was accustomed to seeing around school –
not as smooth and perfect
as they were in her nylons (yes,
girls wore nylons back in the day).

So at the Jersey shore after the Prom
was the first time I saw her legs without nylons,
the first time I saw her in a bathing suit,
and I did not hide my surprise.

I am a low-life piece of shit I admit it,
the uncouth, ignorant son of a car mechanic
(he would never have upset his girl as I did).
I actually made her cry.
I can't forgive myself to this day
(45 years later).
But she just said, "Not a big deal, honestly.
I married you anyway."

Horseshoe Crab

Of course I worry all the time:
I'm a late-middle-age middle-class American,
a child of the 60s, I'm a Baby Boomer.
I'm frightened about everything:
car accidents and tooth aches, back pain,
weight gain, terrorists, email fraud, skin cancer,
bone cancer, heart disease, death, and taxes.

But here in the sand
beneath this colorful beach umbrella,
waves rushing in and back out again,
seagulls, seaweed, sea shells, hermit crabs
and minnows, even a horseshoe crab or 2
(they've been around unchanged for 400 million years),
how can anyone worry for even 2 seconds
about any of that crap.
None of that here today will still
be here tomorrow, not like
the horseshoe crabs will for another 400 million years.

Michael Estabrook is a baby boomer who began getting his poetry published in the late 1980s. Over the years he has published 15 poetry chapbooks, his most recent entitled "When the Muse Speaks." His interests include history, art, music, theatre, opera, and his wife who just happens to be the most beautiful woman he has ever known.

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