

Glenna Hollaway

LA 82

2ND.
PLACE

UNMAILED LETTERS OF A YOUNG MAN MAKING HISTORY

No one dreamed these mountains were so big, Ma;

No one warned me I would be this cold.

Granite towers straighter than the cedars;

Couldn't climb them rocks for love or gold.

Horses fell off backwards it's so steep, Ma.

Just as well they died. We had to eat.

Summer stayed back there on the Missouri;

Here, we only got raw wind and sleet.

Couldn't cross the Lochsa it's so swift, Ma;

Moved on north to find a better way.

Captain Lewis tries to keep us cheerful;

After dark I go somewhere and pray.

Don't know which is worse, the peaks or canyons.

Got to make this stretch before more snow.

Brush and fallen timber act like cages;

Hacking every step is awful slow.

Hope our Injun guide knows what she's doing.

Reckon she's got problems of her own.

Totes a papoose on her back all day, Ma;

She herself don't look to be full grown.

6-A6

Ain't no northwest passage in this country;
Mr. Jefferson's fond hopes are wrong!
Bad investment any way you slice it,
Even if we'd got it for a song.

Ma, I cried last night I got so hungry.
Some of us cooked up a mess of leaves.
All they did was make us sick and thirsty.
Dreamed about our farm and all those beeves.

Ain't no human ever put his foot here;
Even Redmen don't explore this place.
Over three weeks since we stood up level,
Longer since we walked a decent pace.

Guess I'll never see you anymore, Ma.
This here hell has claimed us for its own.
Doubt if I can hold Dan up tomorrow;
We're afraid he's got a broken bone.

Lordy, Ma, we sighted us a prairie!
Maybe we can make it after all.
Even spied a herd of deer down yonder—
Thanksgiving will be earlier this fall!

Sept. 19, 1805, Meriwether Lewis wrote: "To our inexpressible joy we discovered a large tract of prairie to the southwest, our only hope of subsistence as we are reduced and much weakened for want of food." His party had crossed the Bitterroot Range of the Rockies.

2020 A.D. WHERE ONCE A MIGHTY RIVER FLOWED

The travelers disembarked and checked their chart;
Was this the place they came so far to see?
A warp of rotted vines, a rheumy part
In gray Medusa hair on death's debris?
What happened to the scenes deciphered books
Described? The strangers searched the fossil land
For shards of hope, for signs of inglenooks,
Instead found poison traces in the sand.
One took a crusted rock and turned to go,
Then saw scratched words the nodule held in wait:
"Within this case beneath corruption's flow
A primal spore survives to germinate,
Evolve green plants, food crops, and someday trees—
But rivers take more time than Pleiades."

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Rivers raise their spokes—
the silver armature of
summer's parasol.

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Wefts of light and shine,
skeins of floss for dull margins—
river's artistry.

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Stilled water, loosen
the secret fawn's reflection
from winter's talons.

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The seedling cedar
he hoed under the herb bed,
now shades his old age

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THE GO-BETWEEN

(Nursing the Patient in 909)

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Old Judson's wrinkles deepen with dull pain;
He stiffens as his eyes roll out of sight.
We tremble in his room's oblique half-light,
Then time his spells and watch him go insane.
His body mimics death, but not his brain,
For there, unseen, bizarre, lost powers unite—
The great, the expert, history's erudite—
They analyze the future; they explain!
Jud quotes their comments; fogbound issues clear.
Jud never read a book or grasped a plan,
Yet speaks of wars and kingdoms like a peer,
Knows energy and space where time began.
He's foretold too much truth for us to sneer
When prophets choose the tongue of this strange man.

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CRAMPED QUARTERS

Glenna Holloway

The confined condition man labels
Sanity
Is narrow,
Is a slender thrasonical thread
Looped around a certain kind of thrallldom.
~~As living~~ ~~triest~~ its tensile strength,
Now and then it snaps its narrowness.
Only those who remember where
They wandered in such freedom
Know how narrow.

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REFLECTIONS OF A SEASHORE WEEKEND THIRTY YEARS PAST

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Unwilling even then to serve their sticky eyes,
normal they perched high on the hotel veranda,
peering down like dark buzzards at his differentness,
making buzzard sounds, snatching him up with grainy tongues
to volley him like a hare hide between them—
then on to those on the beach sharing sameness,
secure in naked nonentity enough to peel him
with clumsy questions and unskilled pointing.
No matter now if that day, that eight-year-old
had taken off hot anonymity and gone ignoring
to the ocean's feet, felt wind and foam,
played with sand and periwinkles. Instead
he clutched his artless camouflage closer
and ran back to his parents' room where
other children's winged joy attacked walls and windows,
where he wished his flaw were deafness, invisible, unstrange,
or something worse—from which eyes swerve
quick blessed look-away and let-alone— anything
to keep their curiosity and distaste
from surfacing like sweat, dripping down on him,
lodging lye in his pores.
No matter now that he owns the old hotel,
the beach, and some of the people. A man
leached out inside a man: One in patented laminate
coated with success; the other,
unwhole and unholy, no one has yet seen.

1st Prize

ON MAKING A RIVER AN OLD MAN

The river was an athlete sprinting south,
A whistling boy with rhythmic summer stride.
The settlers drew cool sweetness from his mouth,
And made themselves spectators on his side.
Efficiently he handled rain and thaw;
He grew their wheat and cotton into fame.
His flanks became a city; those who saw
Desired to stay, and daily others came.
Pure drinking, mallards, trout were not enough.
Machines re-routed him. They built a dam.
They stole his power, dumped their poison-stuff,
Then cursed him for the filth where once they swam.
Now reeking, limping past a factory,
He seeks a nameless burial at sea.