

EDITOR'S NOTE

I drafted this note in a crowded Apple store, seated on a square wooden stool in The Forum section, waiting to find out if indeed my MacPro's motherboard's days are numbered. (They are.) Next to me, a video screen spanning one entire wall showed an aerial view of NYC, Apple iMessages and emojis appearing and disappearing from various skyscrapers. I looked down at the manuscript of *The Northern Virginia Review* in my lap and felt a rush of gratitude. "There's reading and there's reading," I thought. "Fast and slow. Thank God for the slow kind." Not that I'm not wedded to my devices. When my laptop had a stroke last week, I had to keep reminding myself that nobody died. But fast reading doesn't feed the soul. For that, you need slow reading.

I learned the difference between fast and slow reading when I was uploading submissions to *The Northern Virginia Review* into a single file. Unable to get rid of an evil half-page gap in the middle of a twenty-page story, I typed the whole thing over in a fit of frustration. I'd read the story before. But this time, when I got to the last page, I was choking back tears, racked with the visceral pain I knew the author must have felt when she wrote it. "Yes," she told me later. "I cried when I wrote that page."

The typing had slowed me down enough so the story could get all the way in. The scenes and the characters and the rhythms of the author's voice are there still, a part of me. Now when I read submissions, I read slowly to make sure the doors to my heart are wide open.

What came in this time?

First, there was the feeling of utter belonging you never know you had until it's gone—that feeling came in with "Jude and Mary's House of Love." For an aching split-second, I didn't have to "learn to live with the loss, with /what can't be forgotten," as the speaker in "Auden in Winter (Avedon)" rues. The page and the years dropped away, and I saw again the light that for so long I'd seen shining only in dreams.

Harder was the feeling of indelible terror and shame that came in with "Legacy." As a victim of sexual assault, I found bittersweet solace in hearing another say what that's like—the maimed part of us curled inside, hiding, trying to hide, to shrink to nothing. Like the bowed, white-draped figure in the photograph "Chrysalis 3," we long to emerge and be whole; but we fear the triggers that drive us back, yet again, into mindless terror where we're alone in the dark. Though glad of the solace, my heart was more than ready to welcome in the real-life story of a young Malawi woman who defied her culture's so-called "rite of passage" that amounted to the sexual abuse of young girls. Her spirit shines a light into the dark corners where we hide, and shows the world the truth.

Reading slowly, losing myself in the minds and hearts of *The Review's* writers, poets, and artists, I kept hitting moments when life felt whole, connected. All the circuits worked. The feeling didn't last long; but when it left, awareness of it remained. I no longer felt bereft at the thought of my motherboard's demise.

With a nod to *Star Trek*, read slow and prosper.