

Seat of darkness

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Whispers in the wind led me to lonely land
where once stood my family tree
its Irish roots drank spirits
until a cruel keen blade—sharp with
wrath, jealousy and greed—
split the trunk in two.

Gnarled branches fell, oak and ash
scattered on unplowed farmland and
hidden lake cabins.

My grandfather, a staunch union man
with tarnished gold eyes, toiled as a tire worker,
steering his red Ford through the dusk,
a thrifty soul with calloused hands,
he knew woods and waters;
hunted, fished, and nursed a hidden flask.

Belt cracking obedience kept the boys
straight. Buzz cut and handsome
they followed the liquid path.
Chained Prometheus, pecked at the wheel
and the red-haired Vietnam vet dialyzed to the grave.

Now, as a doctor trained to heal
my own buried wounds open
at the strangest times—
childhood memories surface
as I peer microscopically at the cells
of a cirrhotic man,
stumbling under a cover slip.

I sympathize with the spur cell—

Protoplasmic porcupine
donning spiculated spines,
you traverse the crimson tide
like a stiff octopus,
navigating seas
of round red cells
floating like balloons

Far away from you,
fearing a sudden stop,
they may pop.

As the spur cell drifts, detached,
within its vitreous realm,
memories of kin float adrift
lost in an estuary of exile.

No matter how I adjust the lens, the image blurs—
fragmented dinner table stories,
the aroma of fried fish and pheasant,
echoes of both laughter and lament.

Unlike the liver's power to regenerate,
my childhood relatives are lost,
scattered like spur cells, astray
across a vast crimson solitude.