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Muscongus Bay

Chamberlain, Maine

The ocean rises to windows open
for any stray breeze.
Humid bed sheets stick with froth

tossed up by insistent surf
that shudders the pillars anchoring the house.
Unable to sleep, I lean

on the windowsill, listen to the dark
surge in, the insatiable tide
creneled with embryonic scents

of seaweed and salt.
Night unties its robe
and I lay back down,

sway with water that tumbles
down along the rocky coast,
the deep husked rhythm

that kisses, furrows, thrums
the rocks waiting on shore.

Seagulls and terns call over Long Cove.

Water pulses further up sloughs
like fingers tracing inside the thigh,
over the ridged skin of creek beds,

fiddleheads, marsh pools,
sinuous roots of swale grass,
pine trees, long-legged moose.

Passions spent, the ocean turns,
pulls me beyond the reach of foghorns
and Pemaquid Lighthouse,

out onto water's invisible curve
that rises with me slow, and falls
against the stars' dark dazzling shoals.

Blues

the end of seminary

Kiss the angels goodbye, you smirked
and walked out the door.

Well, we never liked them anyway,
too good to do the grunt work of grace.

Stale cigarettes, ashes of angst,
three years demanding answers

of God, Church, each other.
Empty beer cans late at night

singing Tom Waits and Leadbelly blues.
All we found were more dead saints.

The ocean fog pushes aside
the Golden Gate, our curtains,

this night. Only these damn nails
and snail tracks of masking tape

remain of you and your mentors:
Bonhoeffer, Berrigan, Tillich, King.

Shadows shift across the walls,
cars going home on the streets below.

The red-headed crane on the empty desk
dips its head forward, and drinks.

Mark Liebenow
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Mark Liebenow writes about hiking in Yosemite and recovery from grief. He studied creative writing at Bradley University and the University of Wisconsin and is the author of three nonfiction books. His poetry has been published in a number of journals and nominated for an Illinois Arts Council Award.