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A Graph of the Wind

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A Graph of the Wind

See how this great bull pine
leans to the east,
silver branches twisting
to the rising sun,
bent away from the fury of the west.

It sways, in its arrested turning,
like an old woman, playing the spoons
to a slow dance step, centuries long,

with wooden limbs gouged out
and polished by particles of sandstone
in moving rivers of wind.

Bleached fingers click together.
Long nails trace
a graph of the wind
on the blueprint of sky.

The wind drops to gather itself.

Trouble can be quiet
as you stand in its eye,
thinking your little thoughts,
but the eye can blink
and drown you.

Centuries ago
a hunter stood where you stand now.

Here is a piece of chert, the size
of a guitar pick; in practiced hands
it could flense a deer.
The edge still sharp
after a thousand years!

That hunter saw the ridge stretched out
like a tawny goddess, carved
by a chisel of ice
in the days when the sun fell asleep.

The deer are feeding
in the pines that robe
her curved shoulders.

We live now in our levelheaded houses,
but these great undulations
will dance at noon, like Magi
loosed from the sun's bright lamp.

Trouble moves
and bends the trees
to a northeast permanence; a sign.
Trouble is the wind.

Down a long hall of air
you are allowed to see:
a white house
a horse, a yellow bus,
two figures moving through the grass
in a familiar way,
voices you can almost hear.

In this hour of calm
you are given a chance
to move away from here,

but you close your hand
on the ancient knife
and it pricks you,
to blood memory.

So now a wave comes, far off
and westward. A bending,
a shadow;
a song.

SID MARTY is the author of five books of poetry and five books of nonfiction. He resigned his position as a park warden in the Rockies in 1978 to begin a career as a full-time writer, poet, and singer-songwriter. He is known as an environmental activist and an advocate for national parks. He and his wife, Myrna, live at the foot of the Livingstone Range near the Crowsnest Pass in southwestern Alberta.