

Eyes Straight Ahead

by Mara Adamitz Scrupe

Only stone and rock could hold one person's loss and another's beauty forever.

– Michael Ondaatje

Any off-pitch halter hums the walls. Trying to find major/ minor.
Failure itself rare amplitude. Bluster/ capitulation. A woman
wearing black stockings walks in front of a shattered church. Gazing
straight ahead. Not at the ecclesiastical ruins. She doesn't appear

Lost. Rain's bashing the roof. Cataracts crash.
I'm searching for something. I don't know what. Maybe it's nothing.

A stout man stands in a stone-fenced farmyard surrounded
by treeless emerald hills.
Perhaps the Royal Navy wanted
the wood for masts. Or landlords wanted the land cleared
for ploughing. Or a smoldering city wanted rebuilding. Or Lord
Blennerhasset Chief Baron of the Exchequer wanted
to flush woodkernes out of their lairs. Or. Or. Or.

He – the thickset man – tries hoisting himself over the not very tall
wall. Hands down/ palms to rock crown. He pushes. *Hard.*
Shimmies his rear end. Working out height & distance he tries a hip
swing. Mince & hop. Fails. Prepares to try again. His feet reconsider.
Overcome by inertia. Trajectory. Space-time continuum. From behind
he reminds me of a rowboat spanking the North Sea. Evidently he can't
hear me. I know he can't see me. The boy inside the man remains
unconvinced. Baffled he tries *tries* one last time.
I walk right past. Eyes straight ahead.

I imagine the doors open only *only* for me

A man returns home from a two-day deathwatch
drunk. It's self-inflicted. The misery. He sleeps all day
wakes that night & pours himself another.
I'm eight years old cleaning out the trailer
post-divorce. A dozen fifty-gallon trash bags full:
drained Smirnoff fifths & crushed 3.2 cans.

The train was traveling a hundred eight miles an hour when
it met the curve. The last thirty seconds it sped up. The engineer
can't remember. Perhaps something hit the windshield.
Torque. Horsepower. Momentum.

I'm searching for something. Perhaps it's *nothing*.

A window opens. Flint & sheaf. One hundred & twenty Irish
take Third Class passage to America. An iceberg calves. Makes a baby
capable of killing an ocean liner. Ice fractures rock. Blisters steel.

A saint hears a voice. It speaks to her clearly.
Face of rapture. Cry of bliss. Sixteen-year-old Anna Kelly
hears strange noises. She makes her way up
to the topmost deck. Climbs into Lifeboat #16.

Eight souls perish on the night train home.