

**The infamous BBM file :: 2006-2010**

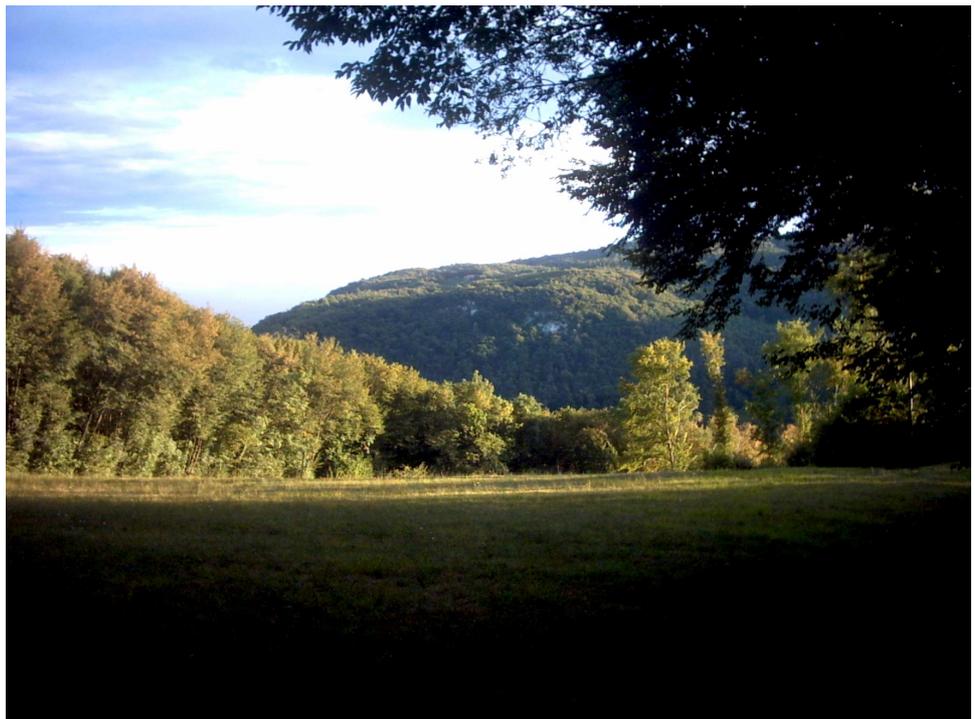
(Annie Proulx, *Brokeback Mountain*, 1997; Ang Lee, *Brokeback Mountain*, 2005)  
by mazaher

::

**summary:**

*Two men*  
*Taste of a life*  
*Trees*  
*Via humida, via sicca*  
*Little star...*  
*Bad weather*  
*Hands like rain*  
*Two voices*  
*Why the hell*  
*Perspectives*  
*Senses*  
*Whipping*  
*Chance meeting*  
*Summertime*  
*Fight*  
*Haikus*  
*Grooming*  
*Sudangrass*

::



## **Two men**

by mazaher

September 22nd, 2006

*I fished out this very short note from among things I wrote about ten years ago. It seems to somehow prefigure eerily the taste and feel of Brokeback, so I thought I'd post it here, for what it's worth, in unaltered translation. Italian version follows.*

*I guess at least now I know what names to call these two by.*

::

Two men on horseback, climbing down the steep incline. Cantering among the sagebrush. Sound of unshod feet along the dusty track. A hawk cries once from up above.

The horses' legs at a walk in the light of the sun beginning to set. They stop. One of them jumps fluidly to the ground (his boot well-oiled under a layer of dust, no spurs; his coat unbuttoned). He kneels, looking at spoor on the track, moving around some dirt with his hand while the other holds the reins (leather gloves, long dark eyes, a sorrel stubble of two days, lips ready to smile).

"There they are" he says, contented, and he hits his gloved hand to the gloved hand of his dark-haired, blue-eyed companion. He remounts his horse, cheerfully they kiss on the mouth, and they lope on, trailing the sun.

::

## **Due uomini**

by mazaher

September 22nd, 2006

*Ho scovato questa brevissima annotazione in mezzo a cose scritte circa dieci anni fa. Mi sembra prefigurare stranamente il gusto e il senso di Brokeback, così ho pensato di ripubblicarla qui, per quel che vale.*

*Per lo meno adesso so chi sono questi due.*

::

Due uomini a cavallo, giù a picco dalla scarpata di arenaria rossa. Galoppo tra i cespugli. Suono dei piedi ferrati sul sentiero polveroso. Un falco stride in cielo una sola volta.

Le gambe dei cavalli al passo, illuminate dal sole che comincia a calare. Si fermano. Uno dei due smonta agilmente (lo stivale di cuoio grasso, impolverato, senza speroni; il pastrano nero sbottonato). Si china a guardare le tracce sulla pista, smuove la sabbia con la mano, tenendo le redini nell'altra (guanti di pelle nera, lunghi occhi scuri, la barba bionda di due giorni, labbra pronte al sorriso).

"Eccoli qua" dice soddisfatto, e batte la mano guantata sulla mano guantata del suo compagno. Rimonta in sella, allegramente si baciano sulla bocca, e ripartono al piccolo galoppo dietro al sole.

::

::

::

### **Taste of a life**

by mazaher  
September 26th, 2006

*Italian version follows.*

::

### ***Ennis Del Mar***

When Death tasted him, many flavors could be felt.  
A base of tenacity strenghtened with endurance.  
A layer of diffidence, oxidated from low self-esteem, curdling into harsh privateness.  
Embers of smoldering anger, fed by fear, covered by the cool ashes of patience.  
A few nuts of hard hate, like pebbles among lentils.  
A core of liquid love as bright as sun, thickening into a rind of tenderness.  
A single raisin of hope mixed in, lucky for the one who'd find it.

::

### ***Jack Twist***

When Death tasted him, many flavors could be felt.  
A texture of wonder at how things are in perpetual change, with a crumbly crust of expectation of some good turn surely coming.  
A sprinkle of surprised disappointment when it didn't come yet.  
The fresh lightness of not brooding on things, like lemon rind grated in a cake; the knowledge that not even fear lasts longer than eight seconds.  
The filling, hot taste of wholehearted enthusiasm.  
Acidic, searing spikes of untold pain.  
Love like a fragrant spice permeating everything, since that time when he got lucky with that raisin.

::

### **Il gusto di una vita**

by mazaher  
September 26th, 2006

::

### ***Ennis Del Mar***

Quando la Morte lo assaggiò, incontrò molti sapori.  
Una base di tenacia corroborata dall'abitudine a tener duro.  
Uno strato di diffidenza, ossidato da una bassa opinione di sè, cagliato in ruvida riservatezza.  
Braci di ira rovente, alimentata dalla paura, ricoperta dalle fredde ceneri della pazienza.  
Qualche grumo di odio impenetrabile, come sassolini in mezzo alle lenticchie.  
Un nocciolo di amore liquido, luminoso come il sole, addensato in una scorza di tenerezza.  
Un unico chicco di speranza aggiunto all'impasto come un acino d'uva passa, per portare fortuna a chi lo trovasse.

::

## ***Jack Twist***

Quando la Morte lo assaggiò, incontrò molti sapori.

Una pasta densa di meraviglia per come le cose cambiano di continuo, con una crosta friabile di aspettativa per il colpo di fortuna che sicuramente sta per arrivare.

Uno spruzzo di sorpresa e delusione perchè non arriva ancora.

La freschezza leggera di non immusonircisi, come buccia di limone grattugiata in una torta; la convinzione, basata sull'esperienza, che nemmeno la paura dura più di otto secondi.

Il gusto caldo e saziante di un entusiasmo senza riserve.

Punte acide, brucianti, di dolore non detto.

L'amore come una spezia fragrante a pervadere ogni cosa, da quella volta che ebbe fortuna con quel chicco di uva passa.

::

::

::

## **Trees**

by mazaher

October 5th, 2006

*Itaoian version follows.*

::

*Robinia pseudoacacia*

He watches his man, riding two lengths in front of him, carefully steering his dark chestnut through the underbrush growing among young wood.

Only time he can watch him and take his time. He's as shy as a coyote, doesn't like being looked at. But the son of a bitch can't seem to get to really trust any kind of rodeo horsemanship when it comes to tough going: he wants to go first whenever the track is difficult, no arguing, so the man behind gets the most of his chance now to take his fill. He'll make it last as long as he can, chewing on it like a cow chews cud, maybe topping it later with a few quick sidelong glances when they'll be sitting next the fire tonight. Inside the tent it'll be too dark to see; not that just going by touch and feel won't be enough in the circumstances anyway.

His man is as tough as a black locust, that's how he is. The bark is thick and rough. Growing anywhere, asking nothing. The timber dense and long-lasting in the face of the elements, giving, up to a point, but then breaking in hard, dangerous splinters. Blooming generously in grapes of white flowers, scented like fresh honey; for a while in spring the whole tree speaks happiness in the buzz and murmur of bees.

Jack Twist can close his eyes now and feel like a bee himself, following his nose to the scent of a black locust all of his own.

::

*Pinus strobus*

He listens to his man, riding two lengths behind him, carelessly letting his buckskin pick her steps as best she can along the path that his own dark chestnut is opening in the underbrush growing among young wood.

He knows he's being watched, but for this once he doesn't care. Like a warrior trusts his shield, he trusts his old coat to cover up his feelings as well as his shoulders. He's not ready yet to admit that the shield has been pierced.

What he doesn't really get to trust is his partner's horsemanship, not as long as he keeps hearing the sound of unsure steps while the inexperienced filly tries to fill in for her daydreaming rider. "Green on green makes black and blue" he mumbles under his breath, but then he hides a smile even from himself when it comes into his mind what exactly the rider behind him may be daydreaming about.

His man is as bright and beautiful as a white pine, that's how he is. The needles are blue and fine, smooth and thick as an animal's winter fur. Straight up he grows, letting the sun steep him and fill him, light being processed mysteriously into the clean, pungent smell of sap oozing out as fragrant resin from the smooth silver bark. And when the wind is up, he sings his own tuneless, wild song.

Ennis Del Mar can close his eyes now and, just for once, imagine singing along with him and with the everlasting wind sweeping the mountaintops.

::

::

::

## **Alberi**

by mazaher

October 5th, 2006

::

### *Robinia pseudoacacia*

Tiene d'occhio il suo uomo, due lunghezze davanti a lui, mentre guida con prudenza il suo sauro scuro attraverso il sottobosco che cresce sotto gli alberi giovani.

E' il solo momento in cui può osservarlo senza fretta. E' timido come un coyote, non gli piace sentirsi addosso gli occhi di nessuno. Ma quel disgraziato dice di non fidarsi di nessun cavaliere da rodeo sul terreno difficile: insiste per andare avanti lui ogni volta che il sentiero si fa poco praticabile, niente discussioni, e così quello che gli sta dietro approfitta dell'occasione di riempirsi gli occhi.

Si farà durare queste immagini più a lungo che può, assaporandole come una vacca rumina il foraggio, aggiungendo magari, più tardi, un paio di bocconi con qualche rapido sguardo di sbieco quando saranno seduti accanto al fuoco stasera. Dentro la tenda è troppo buio per vederci; non che andare a tatto e a sensazione non sia già più che abbastanza, date le circostanze.

Il suo uomo è tosto come una robinia, ecco com'è. La corteccia è spessa e ruvida. Cresce dappertutto, senza chiedere niente. Il legno è compatto e dura a lungo anche esposto agli elementi, elastico fino a un certo punto, ma poi si spezza in schegge dure, pericolose. Fiorisce in grappoli generosi di fiori bianchi, profumati di miele, e per un po' in primavera tutto l'albero racconta la felicità nel ronzio e mormorio delle api.

Jack Twist chiude gli occhi e si sente un'ape anche lui, mentre segue il proprio naso lungo la scia di profumo di una robinia tutta sua.

::

### *Pinus strobus*

Ascolta il suo uomo, due lunghezze dietro di lui, distrattamente lasciare la sua cavalla falba ad arrangiarsi a mettere un piede davanti all'altro lungo il varco aperto dal suo sauro scuro attraverso il sottobosco che cresce sotto gli alberi giovani.

Sa di essere osservato, ma per una volta non gli importa. Come un guerriero conta sul suo scudo, lui conta che la vecchia giacca copra i suoi sentimenti come gli copre le spalle. Non è ancora pronto ad ammettere che lo scudo è stato trapassato.

Quello su cui non può proprio contare è l'abilità di cavaliere del suo compagno, almeno non finché continua a sentire il suono di passi incerti mentre la puledra inesperta cerca di fare, oltre al suo lavoro, anche quello che dovrebbe fare un cavaliere evidentemente perso nel mondo dei sogni.

"Verde su verde vien fuori nero e blu" borbotta sottovoce, ma poi gli scappa di sorridere quando gli viene in mente che cosa di preciso sta forse fantasticando il cavaliere che lo segue. Il suo uomo è luminoso e bello come un pino strobo, ecco com'è. Gli aghi sono azzurri e sottili, lisci e fitti come una pelliccia invernale. Dritto verso l'alto cresce, lasciando che il sole lo penetri e lo riempia, mentre la luce viene misteriosamente trasformata nell'odore pulito e pungente della linfa che trasuda dalla liscia corteccia argentata. E quando si alza il vento, canta la sua canzone stonata e selvaggia.

Ennis Del Mar chiude gli occhi e, per una volta, immagina di cantare insieme a lui e insieme al vento eterno che soffia sulle cime.

::

::

::

***Via humida, via sicca***

by mazaher

November 23rd, 2006

*I apologize for the convoluted title, making reference to practical alchemy and the two ways of performing the transmutation of brute matter into philosophical gold.*

*The masters of alchemy knew very well that the wisdom belongs to the blessed, needs no teaching to be learned, and works its miracles unseen.*

*Italian version follows.*

::

Jack is humming softly to himself, watching the flames rise from the campfire. Ennis looks at him for a long time, with the intent stare of a wolf-dog to his man.

"Happy 'bout what?"

Jack turns to him, startled from his wordless musings.

"About all this. After all that time, now us together for good since... what? Twelve years already next Christmas, ain't it now? Nothing short of a miracle, and I still wonder how you, or I, or both, managed to pull it off."

A pause. Then Ennis speaks softly, his eyes turning from Jack to the flames.

"Just guess there's two ways to go 'bout makin' miracles."

"Those being...?"

"Reckon one is going at it long enough and hard enough. Bit like putting the shine on a horse. You groom, and ride, and feed, and groom again, for weeks and months, and next thing you know the scruffy hairball sheds into a beauty. You can't get it all at once, needs time to grow and ripe. Needs a little patience."

Ennis glances sideways at Jack, a hint of a smile at the corner of his mouth.

"That's what I see you keep doing long after I've yawned my jaw off trying. Drawn-out boring affair, I'd sooner watch paint dry. Tell me 'bout the other way, it'll sure be more exciting."

Jack is tending to Ennis's unusually flowing talk like a gardener to his orchard, letting it evolve and be fruitful on its own terms, adding in only just the right encouragement. Unaware how his attitude contradicts his words.

"Ah, the other way... It works out well with things already ripe. Just one move does the trick and the miracle comes right by your hand. But there's mighty few people can do it, 'cause it needs perfect timing and must be a perfect move."

"Perfect like what?"

"Like one move you made."

Ennis stops suddenly, lowering his head. In the light of the fire Jack can see he's blushing.

"Hm?"

Neither request nor closure, a small sound like an open door, inviting Ennis in if only he'll feel like saying the next words.

He does.

"Like that one move you made inside the tent one night on Brokeback in '63."

Ennis' face is purple now, but nobody can see it, buried into Jack's embrace.

::

::

::

## ***Via humida, via sicca***

by mazaher

November 23rd, 2006

*Chiedo scusa per il riferimento nel titolo all'alchimia pratica e alle due vie per realizzare la trasmutazione della materia bruta in oro filosofico.*

*I maestri alchimisti sapevano benissimo che la sapienza appartiene ai benedetti, che non ha bisogno di essere insegnata in una scuola, e che opera i suoi miracoli senza farsi notare.*

::

Jack canticchia piano tra sè e sè, fissando le fiamme che si alzano dal fuoco da campo. Ennis lo osserva da un pezzo, con lo sguardo intento con cui un cane antico guarda il suo uomo.

"Di cosa sei così contento?"

Jack si gira a guardarlo, riscuotendosi all'improvviso dal suo fantasticare senza parole.

"Di questo. Dopo tutto quel tempo, noi due insieme per davvero, da quando? ...Dodici anni a dicembre prossimo, no? Un miracolo, accidenti, e mi domando ancora come abbiamo fatto, tu, o io, o tutti e due."

Una pausa. Poi Ennis dice sottovoce, spostando lo sguardo da Jack alle fiamme:

"Magari ci sono due modi di fare i miracoli."

"E cioè...?"

"Mi sa che uno è di darci dentro per tutto il tempo che ci vuole, facendo tutto quello che ci vuole. Come mettere in condizione un cavallo. Lo governi, lo monti, gli misuri la razione, lo governi ancora, settimane o mesi, e a un certo punto, alla prima muta, invece di una palla di pelo ti trovi una bellezza. Non si fa tutto in un colpo, ci vuole tempo perchè cresca e maturi. Ci vuole pazienza."

Ennis lancia un'occhiata a Jack, l'accenno di un sorriso all'angolo della bocca.

"E' quello che ti vedo fare sempre, anche dopo che a me è cascata la mascella a forza di sbadigli. Tirare per le lunghe è una barba, preferisco guardar asciugare la vernice. Dimmi l'altro modo, ci vuol poco perchè sia più interessante."

Jack si coltiva questa conversazione con Ennis, tanto più sciolta del solito, come un giardiniere cura un frutteto, lasciando che si sviluppi e faccia frutti a modo proprio, limitandosi a metterci di suo solo quanto basta di incoraggiamento. Non si rende conto di quanto questo contraddica le parole che ha appena detto.

"Ah, l'altro modo... Funziona bene con le cose già mature. Basta una mossa e il miracolo ti casca dritto in mano. Ma sono pochissimi quelli che ci riescono. Ci vuole tempismo perfetto e deve essere una mossa perfetta."

"Perfetta come?"

"Come una mossa che hai fatto tu."

Ennis di colpo tace, abbassando la testa. Alla luce del fuoco Jack vede che è rosso in faccia.

"Hm?"

Nè richiesta nè assenso, un piccolo suono interrogativo come una porta aperta che invita Ennis a entrare, se si sente di dire quello che viene dopo.

A quanto pare se la sente.

"Come quella mossa che hai fatto nella tenda una notte del '63 a Brokeback."

La faccia di Ennis adesso è color porpora, ma nessuno la vede perchè Jack lo abbraccia forte.

::

::

::

**Little star, little star...**

by mazaher

November 23rd, 2006

*Warning 1: Canon, this time out.*

*Warning 2: Character death. What is passing through Jack's mind while he's waiting for his death.*

*Warning 3: On second thoughts, this may be some sort of unwilling quotation of a movie I don't like, Kubrick's 2001: Space Odyssey.*

*Italian version follows.*

::

*Little star, little star*

*Night is coming, getting dark*

It's dark all around, even if the sun isn't setting yet. Some more miles to go to Childress ...or to Riverton? once he gets to changing that darn tire, but he's so exhausted. He feels sleep taking him from behind, like that one time... that night...

*The flame flickers,  
the cow's in the barn*

Flickering is the narrow view he still can focus on: leaves of grass, gravel at the roadside, dark red splotches smelling like iron, and these pangs shooting through him, why? He leaves it be, following instead the words sung inside his mind by a voice he doesn't need an effort to put a name to.

*The cow with her calf,  
the ewe with her lamb,  
the hen with her chicken*

Warm he felt, safe, wrapped up together by sleep and by his arms, his chest, the body of him, his voice singing softly in his ear a small song ancient of thousand years. *Fereis ois, fereis aiga, fereis materi paida.*

*and all with their mom  
and all with their children  
and all asleep fast.*

Ancient as Mother.

Ancient as Death.

::

::

::

## **Stella stellina...**

by mazaher

November 23rd, 2006

*Attenzione 1: questa volta è canon.*

*Attenzione 2: Morte di personaggio. Cosa passa per la mente di Jack mentre aspetta di morire.*

*Attenzione 3: Ripensandoci, potrebbe trattarsi di una involontaria citazione da un film che non mi piace, 2001: Odissea nello spazio di Stanley Kubrick.*

::

*Stella stellina*

*la notte si avvicina*

E' buio tutto attorno, eppure non è ancora il tramonto. Qualche altro miglio da fare fino a Childress ...o fino a Riverton? una volta che avrà cambiata quella dannata ruota, ma è troppo stanco. Sente il sonno prenderlo alle spalle, come quella volta... quella notte...

*La fiamma traballa*

*la mucca è nella stalla*

Traballa il cerchio ristretto che riesce ancora a mettere a fuoco: fili d'erba, ghiaino al bordo della strada, chiazze rosso scuro, che odorano di ferro, e queste fitte di dolore, perchè? Lascia perdere, si concentra invece sulle parole che gli suonano in testa, cantate da una voce che non ha bisogno di sforzarsi per riconoscere.

*La mucca e il vitello*

*la pecora e l'agnello*

*la chioccia e il pulcino*

Caldo, era, al sicuro, avvolto insieme dal sonno e dalle braccia, dal petto, dal corpo di lui, dalla sua voce che gli cantava all'orecchio una piccola canzone antica di migliaia di anni. *Fereis ois, fereis aiga, fereis materi paida.*

*Ognuno ha il suo bambino*

*ognuno ha la sua mamma*

*e tutti fan la nanna*

Antica come la Madre.

Antica come la Morte.

::

::

::

## **Bad Weather**

by mazaher

December 19th, 2006

*Warning: Canon, again. Italian version follows.*

::

The rain is a soft patter on the canvas of the tent. Looking out, as he does every few moments, he can see a thread of fine silver hanging between the clearing and the dark firs. The stones surfacing here and there among the short mountain grass are shining dully in the grey, waning half-light of a late afternoon under summer rain.

Rain, fine and steady and very wet.

He has carefully moved their things around inside the tent, so that nothing can bridge water inside from the thin cotton sheet which alone protects them. There is not much more he can do; in such weather, they'll have to make do with warming up dinner on the tiniest fire, lit at the mouth of the tent, and even that will take some luck. He pats the pocket of his shirt, checking for dry enough matches.

Once again he glances out, toward the upper pasture, but the cover of clouds, moving low and oh so slowly, hides it from his view.

Rain, fine and steady and almost hypnotic. The sound of millions of raindrops falling is like a hushed murmur, an intimate conversation between the sky and the trees. Sitting there, watching, he can almost make out the words. The firs have a sound, the birches another, the larches whisper faintly, the beeches sing more lowly. Behind their voices, a faint buzzing, a deeper silence.

Cold.

Empty.

The sound of Earth, uncaring of the life growing, crawling, feeding, spewing, seeding, dying on its face.

The sound of utter loneliness.

He shivers.

But a moment later, or a lifetime, another sound reaches his consciousness, the steps of a horse.

He listens carefully, as he always does. The slightly hurried ambling, rolling down where the track is smoother. The careful tread on rough ground. The occasional slip of a hind leg on loose pebbles slick with mud.

There they are, coming out in the open from among the firs. The dark bay is streaked darker with rain, and so are the clothes on his man, his shoulders hunched, his collar upturned, his hat down on his brow, water dripping from the brim, from the elbows of the coat and and from the heels of his boots pressed down in the stirrups.

He watches silently as the other dismounts, unsaddles, takes the bridle off, and tucks both under a corner of the tarp hopefully keeping their heap of cut wood dry for tomorrow's breakfast coffee.

"What a shit of a weather for it being August" he says, tentatively, as the other comes toward the tent, his steps as slow and even and deliberate as the rain itself.

"Just rain, Jack. Sheep don't mind. Neither horses or the dogs".

"You're not covered in hair but clothes, Ennis, and clothes get wetter. You're soaked".

"I'm not".

But he falters on the threshold, unwilling to drip on the bedroll.

Something must be done, and Jack does it.

"C'mere". He takes Ennis' hand, draws him reluctantly in, pulls him to his knees with him under the low canvas ceiling. Takes off his hat, shakes the drops out, puts it down to the side. Brings his fingers to the coat, unhooking buttons, slipping it down, damp all the way through, from his shoulders.

Ennis' hands cover his, stopping them. Those eyes raised to stare into his own, questioning.

"Lemme" he hears himself say, half in reassurance, half begging permission. The pressure eases on his hands, he slips them out of Ennis' grip, takes his coat off.

It is dark outside now, the sun already set behind the clouds, and even darker inside.

No way to see any difference anymore between whatever opposites seem so obvious in the light of day.

Soon Ennis will be dry, in long strokes of warm hands.

And suddenly "love" means just that.

::

### **Brutto tempo**

by Mazaher

December 19th, 2006

::

La pioggia è un rumore morbido sulla tela della tenda. Fuori, dove guarda ogni poco, una trama argentea è stesa tra la radura e gli abeti scuri. Le pietre che affiorano qua e là in mezzo alla corta erba montana luccicano fiocamente nella mezza luce calante di un grigio tardo pomeriggio di pioggia estiva.

Pioggia, fine e insistente e molto bagnata.

Ha riordinato le loro cose nella tenda, spostandole in modo che nulla tocchi il sottile strato di cotone che li protegge, lasciando penetrare l'acqua. Non c'è molto altro che possa fare; con questo tempo, dovranno arrangiarsi a scaldare la cena su un fuoco minuscolo, acceso appena dentro la tenda, e anche per quello ci vorrà fortuna. Porta la mano alla tasca della camicia, controllando di avere fiammiferi abbastanza asciutti.

Ancora una volta dà un'occhiata fuori, verso il pascolo alto, ma lo strato di nuvole, che si muove basso e così lento, lo nasconde alla vista.

Pioggia, fine e insistente e quasi ipnotica.

Il suono di milioni di gocce che cadono è come un mormorio sommesso, una conversazione intima tra il cielo e gli alberi. Sta lì seduto, attento, e quasi ne distingue le parole. Gli abeti hanno un suono, le betulle un altro, i larici sussurrano fiocamente, i faggi cantano piano. Dietro le loro voci, un ronzare basso, un silenzio più fondo.

Freddo.

Vuoto.

Il suono della Terra, che non bada alla vita che cresce, striscia, mangia, feconda, dissemina, muore su di essa.

Il suono della completa solitudine.

Ha un brivido.

Ma un momento più tardi, o una vita più tardi, un altro suono lo raggiunge, il passo di un cavallo.

Ascolta attento, come fa sempre. L'ambio un po' affrettato con cui si lascia rotolare giù dove il sentiero è più piano. I piedi poggiati con cura sul terreno difficile. L'occasionale scivolata di un posteriore sui ciottoli viscidici di fango.

Eccoli uscire all'aperto di tra gli abeti. Il baio scuro è striato di chiazze di pioggia come gli abiti del suo uomo, le spalle curve, il colletto tirato su, il cappello calato sugli occhi, l'acqua che gocciola dalla tesa, dai gomiti della giacca, dai tacchi degli stivali abbassati nelle staffe.

Guarda in silenzio mentre l'altro smonta, dissella, toglie la testiera, e infila entrambe sotto un angolo del telo impermeabile che sperano tenga asciutto per il caffè di domattina il mucchio della legna già tagliata.

"Tempo di merda, per essere agosto" prova a dire mentre l'altro viene verso la tenda, i suoi passi lenti eguali e deliberati come la pioggia stessa.

"E' solo pioggia, Jack. Le pecore non ci badano. Neanche i cavalli e i cani".

"Tu non sei coperto di pelo, Ennis, ma di vestiti, e i vestiti si bagnano di più. Sei fradicio".

"Macchè".

Ma esita sulla soglia, non volendo gocciolare sul sacco a pelo.

Bisogna trovare una soluzione, e Jack la trova.

"Vien qua". Lo prende per mano, lo tira dentro riluttante, lo spinge in ginocchio davanti a sé sotto il basso soffitto di tela. Gli toglie il cappello, lo scrolla fuori, lo appoggia di lato. Allunga le dita verso la giacca, slacciando bottoni, facendogliela scivolare, intrisa di pioggia, giù dalle spalle.

Le mani di Ennis coprono le sue, le fermano. Quegli occhi, alzati nei suoi, interrogativi.  
"Lascia che faccia" si ascolta dire, metà rassicurandolo, metà chiedendogli il permesso. La stretta si allenta, sfilata le mani dalla presa, gli toglie la giacca.  
E' scuro fuori adesso, col sole già calato dietro le nuvole, e anche più scuro all'interno.  
Non si riesce più a vedere nessuna differenza tra nessuno degli opposti che sembrano così evidenti alla luce del giorno.  
Presto Ennis sarà asciutto, in lunghe calde carezze.  
E all'improvviso "amore" vuol dire nient'altro che questo.

::

::

::

### **Hands like rain**

by mazaher, 2007

*a 100-word drabble, more or less a companion to Bad Weather, from Ennis' POV*

::

*On stolen horses  
and borrowed time...*

(JAMES MCMURTRY, *Hands like rain*, in *Candyland*, 1992)

It's raining again. It could be snow, this high, in February. There's still some in patches, grayed and crunchy from the cycle of melting and freezing again. Under the trees the ground is clean, all last year's brown leaves and pine needles. The rain brings out the dense smell of resin and earth. But it's not what makes me breathless. It's his hands on me. Delicate, determined. Silent and soft. Taking their time and not tiring, not so soon. Waking up in me all that I thought was frozen forever. Hands like rain. The most natural thing in the world.

::

::

::

## **Two voices**

by mazaher  
December 31st, 2006

::

You came to me  
Against all hope  
And suddenly  
the pieces fit.

*You broke the glass  
Shattered my view  
And look, behind  
A world gleamed new.*

You went away  
Didn't look back  
And nothing  
was right anymore.

*I couldn't trust  
Myself or you  
I stayed on course  
And missed on truth.*

Along the years  
Waiting for luck  
I found to be  
Patient as you.

*Someone will feel  
It was a waste.  
Maybe it was  
Also my best.*

For love to live  
For love to die  
This life, this luck  
I call for mine.

*For love to live,  
For love to die  
I wish I could  
Have called you mine.*

It matters not  
It's in the past  
Memory's long  
Only as you last.

*It matters still  
Long as I breathe  
And then we'll hide  
In other lives.*

::

## Why the hell

by mazaher

January 25th, 2007

*This is a "double" in the sense of Moreno's psycho-drama, i.e. me putting into Ennis' mind my own words about my own feelings about Jack, right after they met on screen.*

*I don't feel it was in any sense a love at first sight on Ennis' part, whatever it may have been on Jack's, and despite quite a few ffs arguing in that direction.*

*It seems to me that, to introverted, melancholy, ethics-dominated Ennis Del Mar, Jack Twist is an acquired taste. Addictive, but acquired.*

*Italian version follows.*

::

He just doesn't get it.

How come Jack Twist is making such a hit on him?

After all, first thing he's known is him kickin' his own truck's tire because the clutch has slipped; surely not the truck's fault, that. Unheard of, too, a clutch ever been fixed by kicking at tires.

And how he goes on complaining about this and that, neither trying to fix things nor standing them manly if they can't be fixed.

How he made clear over their very first beer that Aguirre's demands on hired hands are an insult to justice, to reason, and to himself personally, nodding just so, brows raised, eyes wide, making sure he has Ennis' full attention, and hopefully his pity too, for what he's had to endure last year, what with that fuckin' thunderstorm and all.

Then, the fight he has willingly, too willingly, stuck himself into with the buckskin mare, rather than take it easy and make her feel ok enough with him to pay attention to her work.

It seems for all the world that Jack's character, interests, outlook on life, work ethics (or the lack of it) and ethics at large, are hopelessly clashing with his own, and at first Ennis feared summer's goin' to feel even longer than its due stretch in calendar's days.

Yet here he is now, sitting on the ground on the high pasture, backside getting wet with morning dew, musing –again– about his co-worker. Eager already for the end of the day and the moment he can start his trip back to that campfire. And wondering why.

Not that any direct clue is coming from Jack either, about what makes him so endearing sometimes. The guy doesn't seem to know anything much about himself... Not in words at least, although words he does speak. Too many most of the time.

But maybe a few clues are coming from other sources.

The way he picked up the puppy, folding her carefully inside his coat and shifting the reins to his right hand in order to hold her safe while riding along.

How he hears him always humming under his breath, without even being aware of it, like a drone of inner harmony behind the flow of time, stopping only to resume his running commentary on life in general as soon as they get together.

The way he sometimes forgets about his hands, and they just lay somewhere, on his knee or around the bottle or holding each other, relaxed and still, strong but delicate like fine, dry horse legs.

How he yawns and stretches unselfconsciously, as a child whose parents have not begun yet teaching manners to.

And the light, the special light of his smiles, startling Ennis every time like the unwanted memory of happy times a long time past. Like despite all the wrong things, bad weather, silly sheep, Aguirre's orders, beans for dinner, cold nights, coyotes, damp matches, no money, and only one belt buckle won, despite all that, somewhere, somehow, hope is still shining.

::

::

::

## **Perchè diamine**

by mazaher

January 25th, 2007

*Questo è un "doppio" nel senso dello psicodramma di Moreno, ovvero sono io che metto in testa a Ennis parole mie sulle mie impressioni a proposito di Jack, subito dopo che si sono incontrati.*

*Non credo sia stato in nessun senso amore a prima vista da parte di Ennis, come che siano andate le cose da parte di Jack, e nonostante un certo numero di fanfiction argomentino in quella direzione.*

*A me pare che per Ennis Del Mar introverso, melanconico, governato da considerazioni di etic,a il gusto per Jack Twist è qualcosa di appreso. Anche se poi crea dipendenza.*

::

Non gli riesce proprio di capire.

Com'è che Jack Twist lo colpisce tanto?

Dopo tutto, la prima cosa che gli ha visto fare è prendere a calci la ruota del suo pickup perchè la frizione slitta; manco fosse colpa della macchina. E non si è mai sentito che la frizione si aggiusti prendendo a calci le ruote.

Poi come continua a lamentarsi di questo e di quello, senza cercare di mettere le cose a posto nè di sopportarle da uomo se a posto non si possono mettere.

E come ha tenuto a chiarire, già alla prima birra, che le pretese di Aguirre verso i suoi dipendenti sono un insulto alla giustizia, alla ragione, e a lui personalmente. Quel cenno con la testa, sopracciglia alzate, occhi spalancati, per assicurarsi che Ennis gli facesse attenzione, e magari anche lo compatisse per quello che gli era toccato di passare l'anno scorso, con quel cazzo di temporale e tutto il resto.

E la rissa in cui si è cacciato anche troppo volentieri con la cavalla cervata, invece di andarci con calma e farla sentire abbastanza serena da poter badare al lavoro.

Si direbbe che da ogni punto di vista la personalità di Jack, i suoi interessi, la sua visione del mondo, la sua etica del lavoro (o la sua mancanza) e la sua etica in generale siano in contrapposizione senza speranza con i suoi, e al primo momento Ennis ha temuto che l'estate finisca per sembrare anche più lunga della sua prevista durata in giorni.

Eppure eccolo qua, seduto per terra sul pascolo alto, il culo che si inzuppa di rugiada mattutina, riflettendo -di nuovo- sul suo collega. Già impaziente di arrivare alla fine della giornata e di poter ripartire per tornare a quel fuoco da campo. E si domanda perchè.

Da Jack non arriva nessun indizio di che cosa sia a renderglielo così caro, a volte. Non ha l'aria di saperla poi lunga a proposito di se stesso... Non a parole almeno, per quanto di parole ne dica eccome. Anche troppe, quasi sempre.

Ma forse qualche indizio arriva da altre direzioni.

Come ha tirato su il cucciolo, infilandolo con cura dentro la giacca e spostando le redini nella destra per reggerlo saldamente durante il tragitto.

Come lo sente sempre canticchiare tra sè, senza nemmeno rendersene conto, come un basso continuo di armonia dietro il flusso del tempo, smettando solo per riprendere la sua cronaca diretta sulla vita in generale non appena sono di nuovo insieme.

Il modo che ha ogni tanto di dimenticarsi delle mani, abbandonandole lì da qualche parte, poggiate sul ginocchio o attorno alla bottiglia o l'una nell'altra, rilassate e immobili, forti ma delicate come le belle gambe asciutte di un cavallo.

Come sbadiglia e si stira, spudoratamente come un bambino i cui genitori non hanno ancora cominciato a insegnargli le buone maniere.

E la luce, la luce speciale dei suoi sorrisi, che ogni volta fanno trasalire Ennis come il ricordo indesiderato di tempi felici molto lontani nel tempo. Come se a dispetto di tutte le cose storte, il brutto tempo, quelle stupide pecore, gli ordini di Aguirre, i fagioli per cena, le notti gelide, i coyote, i fiammiferi umidi, niente soldi, e una sola fibbia vinta, come se a dispetto di tutto questo, da qualche parte, in qualche modo, la speranza ancora splendesse.

::

## Perspectives

by mazaher  
May 12th, 2007

*Written for the May challenge at Brokebackslash on LJ: Picture prompt no. 4, Straight highway  
Canon, dead!Jack*

::



It's funny how things look from a different perspective.

Like when you stretch in the sun, face down on pasture grass, and suddenly each blade, each crawling bug, each flowery scent picks up a personal conversation with you.

Like when you are letting yourself roll off the bull's swinging back, eight second bell still ringing, and for a fraction of a moment you see his belly, ventral line, navel, huge retracted cock and balls flying above you, then he leaps away, leaving you alone once again in the light and the dust, and on shaky feet you hurry the fuck out of there, now.

Like one cold summer night under a canvas tent on top of nowhere, when you realized with a shiver who it was that you loved, and knew for sure you would, whatever the price to pay, whatever the outcome.

Or like now, stretched on rough ground on the side of the road, grit getting pasted with blood oozing from gashes which shouldn't be there, trying to crawl nearer to your truck and failing because for some reason you can't breathe anymore. You look at the highway from a different perspective, blacktop which used to be far under your wheels now so very near, destination which used to be getting closer and closer now forever too far.

You look at your life slipping away past you, in the opposite direction down the double yellow line with the momentum of an eighteen-wheeler, and what you see is so beautiful that, even if you could, you wouldn't change anything at all.

::

## **Senses**

by mazaher

May 27th, 2007

::

### ***Ennis Del Mar meets Jack Twist***

His mama called him Doggy.

"My doggy, my puppy", she'd say, when her toddling youngest stuck his nose on her hands, sniffing for his favorite smells: sliced onions fresh from the garden, lye on laundry days. Apple pancakes on the rare celebrations: tasting before dinner wasn't allowed, so he'd stand below the shelf where the heaped tray was waiting, breathing in deeply and tipping his tongue out to lick the scent.

He learned soon to keep his senses too fine to himself. But still as a boy he'd drop the occasional remark, "I smell snow", or "There's summer coming", or "Mr. Johnson's corn is almost ready for reaping" two farms down the road, or even "The pie mare will deliver before Tuesday" and invariably within the next two or three days he would be proven right.

In church on Sundays he'd close his eyes as if in prayer, and worked at picking apart the scents of acquaintances seated behind him. Family scents, with individual variations: different yarn of clothes, different food, maybe a whiff of Mr. Tollard's forge, Mrs. Alcott's chicken sty or Mr. Crown's black baldies, and the fresh resin aroma of Mr. Wright's sawmill.

His sense of smell had an influence of his attitude to others. One teacher he couldn't stand used to smoke bad cigars, and his clothes stank. That's when he got into the habit of sitting at the far end of the room at school, next to the window; being farsighted, he could read on the blackboard well enough anyway. In the early times when he'd just met Alma, she once asked him playfully "What's that you like so much in me?". She'd been peeling onions for soup. "You smell good" he'd answered without thinking.

When he stood outside the foreman's trailer in Signal, metal and peeling paint getting warm in the sun, tar on the railroad stills exhaling its choking smell, his nose focused itself at once on the personal scent of the young man who'd just jumped out of his truck. Fresh, thin, foreign: white soap, old leather, clean shirt. Unsettling, like being the unwilling guest of strangers, who keep things in a different order and do things in a different way than at home. A different seasoning in their pancakes. On his way to that first beer drunk together, in the heat and white light of the road, he mainly followed his nose under the lowered brim of his hat.

Later he'd discover the salty tang of the other's temples, just under the line of hair, the hot smell of his skin in late afternoon, the line of scent his girth left on his jeans.

Exciting, melancholy, addictive. Since the first moment, he was already missing it.

::

### ***Jack Twist meets Ennis Del Mar***

A wild animal. That's what he looked.

Like that wild kitten he'd found, still alive among three dead siblings, no mother in sight. While she ate, growling, the ham and cheese he'd given her out of his sandwich, he'd slowly stretched his hand and for a moment he'd managed to stroke her on the nape of her thin neck. Taut, electric body, thinly striped gray fur fine and slick under his fingers, and then in a flash, her hunger partly sated, her fear suddenly returning when she'd realized a human, an ogre, was touching her, she'd turned and slashed his hand with tiny, knifelike claws, curling afterwards at the far end of the hole, hissing and spitting with ears flattened back and eyes wide with desperation while he stepped back, sucking blood from the deep scratch.

He'd had no other choice than to leave her there and hope she'd manage. He'd come back with the remains of a stew two days later, playing a risky hide-and-seek from his father. He only found the three little corpses, now rotting in the heat, and no live kitten. But the memory of that brief touch, skin so thin and pliant, muscles so tough underneath, had left him wistful for more.

It was not the same, touching them dead: rabbits, badgers, quail, coyotes, even a cougar once, when a squad of neighbors had gathered to kill off the new menace to their calves, lambs and foals. A dead animal is empty of himself. A live animal, a wild live animal, is filled with the wonder of its being alive.

He'd felt his hands tingling, that early morning in Signal when he'd jumped from his truck and turned to have a good look at the man he'd glimpsed while driving by. A wild animal, a cougar caught in the open, trying not to be noticed until he can safely retreat, trying not to show his apprehension, ready to strike if discovered and cornered. Even the color of his coat reminded him of the sandy, light-ochre hair of a cougar. And he kept his distance.

It was a surprise, watching how in the following days he'd let him narrow that distance, inch after inch, evening after evening. It was a thrill hearing him laugh, like hearing a cougar purring at you, and wishing for all the world you'll somehow manage to come up with something to make him purr again.

And then, maybe, just maybe, you'll dare to touch.

::

::

::

## Whipping

by mazaher

June 27th, 2007

*A different take on the making-up scene in MONTANA CROWS' Beans and Crazies, ch. 60, Broken, at <http://montana-crows.livejournal.com/22086.html>*

*Background inspiration, detected ex post: the fight between two Whipsnade wolves in KONRAD LORENZ, King Solomon's Ring, part 1, ch. 10, and the reflections of the same author about applications of Tinbergen's concept of redirected activity to human survival in ID., On Aggression, end of ch. 4 in first edition.*

::

### Montana Crows wrote:

Joanna, reading on her bunk, hardly acknowledged his presence when he came in. Ennis was whittling something - it hadn't taken much shape yet, though it was clearly an animal - and didn't even glance up.

"Come out to the pasture with me?"

Dark eyes flicked up to his, then back down.

"Why?"

"I got some things to say," he said. It didn't come out sounding like he'd hoped.

Ennis shrugged and sighed, put the wood and pocketknife on the quilt, and walked out ahead of Jack.

They stood there in the dark, and Ennis tried not to watch how the nighttime wind blew Jack's unruly hair around. He'd been waiting for this, for the declaration that Jack was finally leaving, so he could pick up the pieces of himself.

"I'm sorry, Ennis."

"Said that already." He chewed a hangnail on his ring finger, stared at the dark forms of the Crazies in the distance.

"Ennis, please -"

He shook his head.

"You was the one started this. An' now I guess you ended it, huh?"

"Ennis, please -"

"Don't fuckin' 'Ennis please' me, huh? I had all I can take. Why don't you just go back where you came from, Jack, an' leave me out a this. I can't -"

"I know, and I'm sorry."

Jack stepped toward him, and he took a step back, kept the distance equal.

"I fucked it up," Jack said quietly. "And I've never regretted somethin' so bad in my whole life, Ennis." He took a deep breath, and despite himself Ennis let him finish.

"Realized just what I had with you, an' it wasn't -" He faltered, resumed. "Wasn't like I thought, for awhile. I mean, I wasn't thinkin' straight, an' -"

He stumbled, groping for the right words, and was ashamed to feel his throat swelling closed, the heat behind his eyes.

::

### Then I took a side road:

"Here" he went on. "I guess it's my turn."

Ennis raised his eyes, startled by the finality in his voice. Jack was holding the bull-whip, neatly coiled, handle offered to his hand. Ennis stepped back like it was a snake.

"If it's the only way we can get to be in this together, then take it, Ennis. Make it even between us. Make it equal. Let's pay our debts, the both of us, and maybe finally we'll have earned our life."

Ennis stood frozen, eyes dark and troubled. He didn't react when Jack pushed the whip in his hand, but his fingers tightened on the handle almost with a will of their own.

The cord uncoiled and slipped free, tip on the ground.

Jack turned, unbuttoned his coat and shirt, took them off, took off his hat, hanged them on the nearest post, then leaned on the top rail, gripping the upper edge.

"Come on, Ennis. Get to it."

Head down, not turning.

He could not hold himself from shivering when he heard the whip swish behind his back.

But the leash never touched him.

It hit the rail an inch from his right hand, chiseling a long nick all around the seasoned locust-tree wood, cutting bark. And again and again the sharp hot tip hit wood, left and right of Jack's hands, taking on an obsessive rhythm of its own, echoing Jack's fast heartbeat while he stood stock-still, unharmed and trembling from his cold fear and Ennis' cold anger.

Maybe also from something else.

Jack had lost track of time when he heard a sob. The swishing ceased, the whip was thrown away.

Ennis shuffled near, reached a hand to Jack's shoulders, glistening with icy sweat.

Jack let out the long sigh he hadn't realized he was holding. He felt Ennis hug him tight, breath ragged from trying to keep back scalding tears he wasn't aware of shedding.

Gently, Jack turned. Gently, he held him.

"Why did you whip fence?" he asked, his voice soft with affection and wonder.

"Cause I'm angry... and I love you" came the whispered answer.

"Even, then?"

Without breaking the embrace, Ennis nodded once.

They held each other silently, until Ennis felt the chill of the night on Jack's skin. He leaned back, reaching for his shirt and his coat, handed them to him.

"Let's go home" he said.

::

::

::

## **Chance meeting**

by mazaher

July 10th, 2007

*PG-13 for sadness*

*Dead!Jack, a few years after canon*

::

Evening on Brokeback Mountain.

Herders camped here in summer, until Forest Service stopped that when the tourists came.

Then they had to stop the tourists.

Nobody should be here now at all.

The old man doesn't care. Since he retired, earlier than he wished, he comes here often. He lets his stout aged gelding carry him to the top, stands for a while, turns back at dusk, alone. But now someone is riding up the path to the clearing.

The rider stops at the edge of the wood, stares for a moment, looks as if turning around, but then he nudges his mare on, walks up, nods briefly.

Middle-aged, looking older than his years.

Both men lean on their saddle horns, looking into the distance across the valley.

"Joe Aguirre, right?"

The rough low voice of the younger man startles him. He made himself a few enemies in his times.

"And you'd be?..."

"Del Mar. Here in '63".

Aguirre sighs. He'd rather not remember.

Silence. Then,

"I told the other one I saw you together".

"Hmm". Del Mar nods. "Don't matter anymore".

"I heard he died".

"I heard that too".

"Guess I was wrong judging. But you was lousy herders all the same".

"Pity we couldn't herd each other any".

Del Mar turns his mare around, jogs across the clearing, disappears among the trees.

::

::

::

## Summertime

by mazaher

July22nd, 2007

*This piece perplexes me.*

*Are we somewhere in the '70 and is this an alternate, more optimistic view of more-or-less canon, showing how Jack was maybe a bit too drastic complaining they never had time together in warm weather?*

*Or is this more likely post-canon dead!Jack, Ennis living alone in a trailer, having a story with his memories and --maybe-- keeping anniversaries?*

*In either case, first I saw Ennis, what he did, how he moved around, and then wrote the words to it.*

::

Usually, Ennis Del Mar is the last to go home in the evening.

He is the one the foreman has charged with turning off the mains switch in the barn after late feeding.

Even in summer, his truck drives off with the lights on.

But not tonight.

Tonight he stops work early.

It's hot, a Saturday in August.

When he gets to his trailer, the sunset breeze has not cooled it out much yet.

He opens the small window and door, making a thin draft.

He washes himself in the sink, letting a trickle of water run along the crook of his arms and down his wrists, until it stops when the tank on the roof gets empty.

Usually he'd fill it up before digging out some dinner for himself.

But not tonight.

He sits with a beer on an empty jerrycan behind the trailer in just his boxers.

It will get dark soon.

Usually he waits inside until the stars come out and it's dark enough not to be watched.

But not tonight.

He leans his head back on to the warm metal and closes his eyes.

He'll be on his way to the Tetons before dawn.

Never could get days off in summer before.

This time, he's had to quit the job.

He takes a long sip.

No way he can eat.

Usually, Ennis Del Mar is not one to plead with his boss like any damn softy trying to slip off work.

But not tonight.

Tonight he's asked, bargained and begged.

He's strung out to the foreman more words in a row than he ever thought he could, surprising them both.

But in the end, it's been useless.

So he quit and lost the last week's paycheck.

He's no idea yet where to turn next.

His breath is coming shorter.

He doesn't know it's fear.

Then he remembers why it is that he quit, and his cock starts getting hard.

He's jerked off a hundred times on the same thoughts that pass in his mind right now.

But not tonight.

He slips the cold wet can of beer between his thighs, presses down, shivers, sighs.

He can wait until tomorrow.

Tonight he can.

::

## **Fight**

by mazaher

July 28th, 2007

*A one-shot set in Potnia Theron's AU, somewhere in the early years of TDM Ranch, between ch. 3 and 4. A little bit of self-help, again.*

*Rated G.*

::

It's a little after 7 pm on a Saturday evening in May when Jack Twist walks out of the front door and onto the porch at TDM Ranch.

Ennis Del Mar looks down from the stack of hay he is carefully building with the truckload delivered in the morning, one inch between bales.

-- Goin' where?

-- Get coupla beers. You come?

-- Can't. Gonna rain before mornin'.

-- Hm-mm. See you then.

-- Hm.

It's a little after 9 pm on that same night when Ennis Del Mar walks through the bar doors.

Not looking either way, he steps straight up to Jack sitting at the bar, listening eagerly to some spicy story the feed-store clerk is telling.

-- Need yer help. Sorry, Ben -- Ennis mumbles, then turns on his heels and makes for the door.

He feels Jack is not following, stops, looks back, frowning.

Jack lets out an annoyed little hiss.

-- Boss's making sure there's no Saturday evenings anymore for me. Mind you tell me the end of your story next time -- and with a friendly pat on Ben's shoulder, Jack's on his feet and following Ennis outside.

He's already in the driving seat when Jack climbs in.

-- What got into you, pullin' me out like that for Chrissake?! Can't I have a quiet beer with friends once in a fucking while?

-- Black Angus's dropping early and there's hay's still out.

-- Damn the Angus and double damn the hay. Whose money were they bought with...

Listening to his own words, at once he knows he said the wrong thing and his voice tapers off. Ennis' face goes blank for a moment, then he opens the door, steps down and starts walking. Away from the truck, away from Jack.

Jack also gets out, runs after him, falls into step at his side.

-- Hey. Hey! Hey, I didn't mean it like that. Ennis, stop. Stop, \*now\*!

-- Fuck off.

The voice is quiet, but a growl nonetheless.

-- Please.

Jack's fingers just touch his elbow.

Ennis stops, turns to face him.

-- Oh, you didn't mean it like that, didn't you? Well, it's you who brought me here. You said to hell where the money comes from, we're into this together. You said we'll do this and we'll do that, fifty-fifty. I'm fine enough with horses and can't keep accounts worth a damn while you can, and you can spell right in writing and know how to talk to people, but I reckon most things we should be doin' together. Yet here I see me working my ass off and you having your beers at the bar. That's not how it should go, mate. Not at all. Unless I am somebody's ranch hand all over again. I expected we'd both be our own boss, but it looks like you are the boss here, not me as you said to Ben. Not quite the boss I'd choose for myself either. Now I'll better hurry, there's a calf on its way.

-- Oh shit.

Ennis thought nothing Jack would say could stop him in his tracks, but this does, Jack's voice carries such awe.

-- Holy fucking shit.

Ennis turns. Jack is leaning his arm on to the next telephone pole for support, and when their eyes meet Ennis can see he's next to crying.

-- What?... What!

-- You got me good, pal. Bang in the bull's eye. You offer me as a matter of course what I wanted all my life, considering me enough to expect from me the same things as from yourself, and I miss it, can't even see it. I can only say, it's so late on that I must have lost hope in the meantime.

He sighs.

-- I'm rather sure I won't ever forgive myself. I wonder if you can, though.

-- Hm-mm.

-- Well, we can ask that Angus later. Let's go, boss.

A pause.

-- OK, boss.

They walk to the truck, get on, drive off.

::

::

::

**bbm haikus**

by mazaher  
August 7th, 2007

*Written for the Small Fandom Haiku-a-thon: Round 02 at*  
<http://trascendenza.livejournal.com/163751.html>

::

*First summer*  
it was such comfort  
so far from their judgement, free  
from being human

::

*I swear*  
Me too. You know that.  
I never said it, you nei-  
ther. We both just knew.

::

*Regret*  
was it a mistake  
getting acquainted with our  
shared life and death

::

*Jack's thoughts:*

*One*  
after we've made love  
sometimes you blow out like  
your golden bay horse

*Two*  
fingers so clever  
your hands warm on my wet skin  
what are you feeling?

*Three*  
usually cloudy  
then your smile shining like  
sparkles on water

::

*Watching game*  
*(Dedicated to grieving\_pln. Thank you, friend!)*

My arm around you  
allow me tonight. Your arm  
around me, pressing

::

## **Grooming**

by mazaher

May 17th, 2007

*Ennis' inner dialogue while working, one morning among many others.*

::

The mare stands still for you without a halter, outside the barn in the cool sunlight. She likes how you touch her.

*He will sit next to you, not even looking, stock still, soaking up your nearness just as much as you do his, until you almost can hear the beat of his heart and wonder if he can hear yours. It gets quicker at the thought.*

Pick up feet, left fore, left hind, right hind, right fore. The hoof pick clangs when you let it drop on concrete in the aisle.

*He's always dropping things, and so much the better if they clang. You still dislike sudden noises, but when you miss him so much you can't stand to think about it, sometimes you let something drop just to hear the clang.*

Brush, brush, curry. Brush, brush, curry. You want her clean and you want her warmed up by this early morning massage. It warms you up too, aging body grateful for the chance to flow slowly into the day's effort.

*So well-groomed lately, well dressed, intimidating even, in the first couple of hours after you meet. Smelling expensive, high-maintenance. Shower as long as you wish, you'll always smell like horses, harness and hay.*

Brush all over, on both sides, between forelegs, behind elbows, along belly, around pasterns. Only your hand between her hind legs and on her teats. She turns to look at you, you feel her upper lip working its caress on your back. Brush her head, across the forehead, down the cheeks and the bridge of her nose, while she moves against the brush in pleasure.

*A dark thin line of hair down from the navel, shafts of hair meeting obliquely in a ridge like a string of arrows pointing lower, on that skin so pale and delicate under your fingertips.*

Step up to the mare's neck, don't look her in the eye, she's shy. Push the mane across, bow under her neck, letting your hand stroke along around her chest as you go. Stand up on the off side, comb it slowly, careful not to break hairs, from withers up to poll and forelock. Get back on the other side, comb again.

*Black hair, short, fine and slick. The pleasure of passing your fingers through it, across the nape of the neck, then grasping them, shaking the scalp gently, inhaling the scent of hair and skin and sweat.*

Slide your hand down the length of her tail, grasp the full tip, begin combing softly, firmly, until the hairs flow like soft silk. Repeat, stop a little bit higher, comb again, letting the straws and knots slip and fall from among the detangled tip lower down. Don't forget the underside, don't neglect the core. Climb up until you get to the root.

The foreman, a younger man with a degree, keeps telling you to let tails well alone and only work them out with the stiff brush for the occasional show, but this red roan has old-fashioned, thick mane and tail, a little wavy, "you either comb it every day or you end up finding mice nesting inside", your mother used to say.

Put down the comb, pick up the flannel rag, dust off the last of the dandruff in long strokes from ears to tail and down each leg.

*Hands with a rhythm, gentle hands sliding down along your back, more tender than you ever thought was possible you'd ever feel after your mother died and you weren't a small kid anymore. Firm enough not to be tickling, wise enough to find and melt each knot of worry.*

Take up the saddle blanket, place it, push it back to just the right position. Take up the saddle, lower it gently on her back. Bend to grasp the girth,  $\frac{3}{4}$  rigging, careful while you fasten it. For this extra-sensitive mare, you changed from cinch to girth so as to be able to easily fasten and loosen a hole if needed, without dismounting. She shivers now as you slowly push up on the billet.

*He also shivers sometimes, when you hug him. The memory makes you shiver now.*

Pick the hackamore, slide it behind her ears, never meeting her eye or she'll raise her head in alarm.

Adjust the fiador. She's been working four months in the hackamore and the foreman wants you to put her in a bridle now, but she's not ready yet. You answer nothing, do nothing, and wait for her to ask.

*Most times, you shouldn't force things. Most times, you should wait for things to happen by themselves. Most times, you shouldn't wish for something which is not happening of its own accord. Most times, but not always. This is something you learned from him, one night, and you have been waiting ever since for a chance to practise. Or maybe a few chances have come and gone and you have done nothing.*

You slide your hand up the mecate reins, grasp the horn, slip your foot into the stirrup, get up, sit quietly. She curls her neck down a little bit, shakes her forelock. You move your hand forward and she steps out at once. You let yourself swing along with her slightly ambling gait. Close your eyes to this fresh light and listen for her hoof beats, one-two, three-four on the dirt track stretching out to the east pasture. You tense your thighs slightly, curling the small of your back just so, feeling your seat getting lighter. She curls her back in the same way under you, raises her forehead, and you both roll upwards and forward into a canter. There has been nothing else like those times you managed cantering as a kid, after climbing in secret on the wide back of your father's stockhorse in the field, bareback, with only a halter rope in your hand, and bumped his sides with your legs yet too short until he fell from trot into cantering... or galloping, or bucking. More often than not, you'd found yourself rolling on the ground, fighting tears of disappointment while you picked yourself up and went after the runaway, trying to catch him before your father caught you.

*No, nothing quite like that, not even the thrill of bronc riding and the pride of mastering your early failures. Not until something else came your way, something to ride –double, bareback and with no reins at all– as long as you both can. Something so big and powerful that everything else in your life, except maybe your own kids, has come to seem only fragments and shards of its image, filling your days and nights and your every action.*

Today it's a good day. Today is one day less until November.

::

::

::

## **Sudangrass**

by mazaher

July 13th, 2010

*I can't believe this short bit took more than two years to finish. Even though a lot of shit happened in the meantime*

::

Ennis is riding shotgun in Jack's truck, elbow propped on the open window, arm upright, fingers curled around the upper edge.

Jack is driving and humming softly to himself.

He glances at Ennis, who is yawning widely after a hard day mending fences.

Finding himself watched, Ennis covers the yawn with the back of his left hand.

Jack quickly shoots him a second look.

"What's on yer face? ...blood?!"

"S nothing... Damn sudangrass cuts".

There's a parking place a little further on the side of the road. Jack stops there and leans across to pick up the bottle of water he keeps behind the passenger's seat.

"You shouldn't mess around cattle with an open wound on your hand. Are you up-to-date with your tetanus shot?"

"Come on, Jack, 's just blood, can wait until home. Tetanus shot you got me t'other day still hurts."

"More like two years ago. And I had to rope you and tie you down and drive you to the doctor. Here, give me your hand."

The thin, deep cut runs across the slightly wrinkled curve between Ennis' left thumb and forefinger. Jack soaks a paper tissue in water from the bottle and wipes it clean of the blood, then squeezes the tissue dry out of the window and drops it under the driver's seat. He takes a clean one, wets it with some more water, raises it to Ennis' face to wash away the blood smear.

Ennis turns to stare at him.

Jack stops, hand raised, caught in the same flashback.

But Ennis smiles a small, shy smile, lowers his eyes, and Jack knows that then was then and now is now. When he dabbles his cheek carefully, Ennis presses back on his hand.

"Thank you," he says, and what he means is, "Yeah, I love you too."

::

::

::