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Finally, Serge Patch

Turner Capehart

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Turner Capehart

(Finally, Serge Patch)

Upon waking I find him in the corner,
trying on my clothes and marking up the
walls with his diagrams.

That is one of his photos next to the
window, it's from his blue period. Some
plaza in Europe where he found himself
alone one day taking the pigeon's portraits
beneath centuries of architecture.

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Serge Patch protects me from being
shocked in the night. My Grandfather
would have liked that when he stayed
up reading, and studying pictures of
the places he could never visit like
Machu Picchu, or the second floor of
his house.

My Grandfather would have liked Mr.
Patch for so many reasons. They both
liked to smoke, they both had had Polio.
They would have gone to matinees
together, or down to Greenlake to
admire the lilies.

The trouble is my Grandfather never
liked to go on walks, except with his
woman. Never liked to do anything but
read, and eat, and coo softly early in
the morning.

He lived in California most of his life,

where neither I nor Serge have ever been.
And he sent my father away to boarding
school so he could have the sun all to himself,
and he raised his kids by the length of the
broom handle he kept between them.

I found Serge on a ship in the Caribbean,
(or maybe it was in the Sea of Japan I
can't remember). Sometimes I forget that
there was a time when he wasn't there,
always blinking, and trying on my clothes.
He has a little red light attached to his
brain that he uses from time to time to
throw techno raves while I'm asleep, and
I wake up and have to tell all his friends
to go home.

In the Encyclopedia Britannica entry for
Serge Patch, he is shown standing in a
blue captain's shirt, smoking a pipe in
some port on the Atlantic, and next to him
is an indistinguishable man in a trench-coat,
and hat, and between them a sailor with
a mustache, but you can't see him, Gorky
had that one removed.

In the pages of Serge's journals I have
found that he had once been a
submarine captain, though on his birth
certificate it says he was born a sea
otter, which would explain his affinity
for sea urchin roe.

I have taken Serge to the museums down-
town to show him the many skulls of
his ancestors, and all the beautiful
variations of guitars. And afterwards
to eat Chinese food in the park, and to

ask Serge if he would draw me in that scene. Serge got out a piece of paper and drew me looking just like my Grandfather used to when he did crossword puzzles out on the veranda in the summer, when I would come out to talk to him, and he would tell me how he used to sail ships of all kinds and sizes, and I asked him what he would have done had he capsized, and he would just shrug and say that he had never worried about It, and simply thought he would deal with it when the time came.

Serge used to save people who fell off of ships, and put them on his back and bring them to shore, and give them a cigarette and some pocket change, and say see-you-later.

On weekends I sometimes stay up all night and read Serge's books, and diaries, and sometimes my Grandfather's too. It used to be, on those nights, I would play table tennis with my Grandfather who would sit on a bar stool, and reach his long arms out, dominating the table. It was the only time I saw him take off his suit jacket. I never play table tennis with Serge.

Once in the fall, I was out biking and crashed and split my hand open, it was Thanksgiving, and the next day my Grandfather died in his sleep, and I didn't want to go to the funeral because I knew it would be black.

Instead, I went to the beach with my
hand wrapped in gauze, and found
Serge whistling to himself, turning over
the rocks to find sea urchins.

And we talked about food, and we
Talked about poetry, and we talked
About windows, but we never talked
about Grandfathers.

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