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Simple

Robert Dana

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## *Robert Dana*

### SIMPLE

*In Memory of Stephen Tudor, 1933-1994  
and Lawrence Pike, 1932-1995*

In the heat of the day  
and a plague of house-  
flies aboard. We're  
barely moving on flat  
water. The air, thick,  
pressing. So Steve  
sets the whisker pole,  
and we wing-on-wing to  
catch whatever breeze  
there is. Not much.  
Now, the waters seem  
readable; the cries  
of shore birds, speech;  
a dragonfly, tethered  
at the sheets, perfectly  
still, a letter in some  
Eastern alphabet aglitter  
in the illiterate light.  
But it's only we who doze  
amid the sweet profanities  
of language; the patient  
spaces each word makes  
to keep the day in place.  
The only story told  
will be the one we tell.  
About how the temperature  
drops suddenly, and the  
north goes white; wind  
like a hurricane's backspin

turning us a full three-  
sixty, the tiller useless.  
Larry looks like Neptune  
in the stinging rain,  
striking sail in the yaw  
and pitch, shoving loose  
gear below. The storm  
jib steadies us now,  
and the helm responds.  
The rest of the story's  
simple. No tricks. Hard  
north. Well off the reef  
above Grindstone City, run-  
ning the troughs of twelve  
foot curls, their dirty  
crests breaking over  
bow and gunwales. Three  
hours later, our teeth  
chattering with cold,  
we surf home on long,  
voluptuous rollers behind  
Port Austin's breakwater.  
The bar, My Brother's  
Place, you'll love. Warm,  
first flush of Daniels;  
the deep-dish pizza.  
And you'll stay playing  
pool, late into the night,  
with the Ukrainian woman  
and her two teenage  
daughters. And she'll love  
the look in your eyes  
as you tell this story.