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The Loon

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Patricia Hampl · *The Loon*

has four cries, one so manic
you shiver to hear it in the night,
beyond joy to plain crazy.
Another like grief, prophetic rage
that a child dies, or anyone.
And two cries in between,
but who bothers with those?
We go, most of us, for the grand gesture.

The morning could not be more frail,
gray as a pensioner's suit.
The huge lake rises in a drift
of haze slightly above itself.
Sun exists, but behind
clouds that are the sky.
An orange butterfly is too rich
but it is here: an orange butterfly.

On 61, the Monson trucks plow
the asphalt to Canada.
Getting goods from one place to another
is as ancient as anything. Voyageurs
in canoes, the seventeenth century,
piles of pelts, tallow,
something dried for food;
there must have been coffee too.
Nothing's modern, not even need.

At Marge's cafe, the truckers are
lonelyhearts, they drink black coffee,
say they write music (just for fun),
want to go to Memphis. One has found
Jesus: I write about *Him* now—it saved
my marriage. On the formica counter
the kitchen-supply coffee mugs

already look like archeology:
pottery of the region, once used as . . .
The hand, holding the mug, will also be shard.
A future desolation claims these details,
and his voice, reaching for the breast
of the waitress, gave up years ago.

There must be a sound for all this.
Tires hiss on the highway.
A paddle was dipped in still water
and rasped the surface, the silence,
moving forward in a line.
Birds, startled by movement,
will make a low, grave noise
with their wings, and fly off.
These things happen at different times,
beyond one life. But with sounds,
with solemn cries and privacy,
doesn't everything finally add up?