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—For section.....Voices/Essay
—Format.....Opinions
—Dateline.....Brattleboro
—Article Number:.....43608

Notes from editor (not for publication):

Cindy, I did some creepy journalism and added the last line as a postscript for context, especially since we never received an obituary for London. If you have reasons for not wanting to include this info, of course I will omit it. I'll be back in touch about the news story. Again — your writing is as beautiful as it is heartbreaking.

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 My huckleberry friend

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 How fortunate was I to be welcomed into London's
3 world

####END SUBHED####

4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 NAKED AND FREEZING, I had just dunked in Broad Brook
6 one raw March morning. London, on the other bank, cupped his
7 hands and yelled, "You're fucking nuts!" followed by the most
8 boisterous laugh I'd ever heard.

9 This was love.

10 He was 10 years older, fabulously handsome, whip
11 smart.

12 I had just lost my idiot boyfriend in a skiing accident,
13 and I was trying to cold plunge out my grief. The nightly gin
14 binging was ruining my skin.

15 London's pipe smoke drifted across the water, warm and
16 safe.

17 Fast friends, he calmed my last nerves with stories of the
18 ghosts of Broad Brook, tales of the natural world. He knew
19 everything about the flora and the fauna, and we shared a
20 reverence for the first spring flowers to arrive — coltsfoot,
21 bloodroot wildflower. For the bobcat, the buck, and the great
22 blue heron that would whoosh low through the bends of the
23 brook looking for fish. Always a good omen.

24 We'd spend hours tossing my rottweiler sticks (logs,
25 whole trees) into the water, and she loved him very much.

26 * * *

27 I'D BEEN INTRIGUED by the theatrical house on the brook
28 for 20 years — the clock tower, the masterful gardens. It sits on a
29 rocky ledge by a thrilling waterfall. Magic. Of course, this was
30 London's house, and how fortunate was I to be welcomed into it.

31 We were soon sharing dinners, rides, books, tequila, and
32 day trips to Hildene. London would leave little notes on my car a
33 few times a day, small gifts on my porch: a perfect cosmo in a
34 little glass vase, a pint of blueberries. We'd sit on my porch all
35 night, drinking and trying to help each other parse the sadness of
36 being human.

37 When I broke both wrists, phalanges, and ulna and
38 dislocated my shoulder, he came and cleaned and cooked. He
39 picked me up from surgeries and drove my son to riding lessons. I
40 hoped I might someday return the kindness.

41 We talked literature, poetry — he could recite hundreds
42 of poems by heart. By his big heart.

43 We had a tree with a hollow, perfect for leaving small
44 treasures. He'd leave a plastic Wonder Woman; I'd volley with a
45 chunk of amethyst.

46 This went on until he died in February.

47 * * *

48 LONDON WAS sensitive, bar none. It's what made him
49 brilliant, and it was also his Achille's heel. He took care of others,
50 but when he became ill he retreated into himself. Trying to help
51 him was poking the bear.

52 His situation became dire last fall. The more I tried, the
53 stronger he pushed me away. I was verklemt. My perfect,
54 wunderkind daughter had been diagnosed with ALS, and the
55 disease took a strong grip.

56 His magnanimous neighbors stepped in and did so much
57 for him. His beautiful sisters came to sort his affairs. They are a
58 balm; like London, generous and spirited.

59 The truth of this story is that I let him down; I couldn't
60 find a way in, and I fumbled.

61 London is now one of his ghosts of the brook, roaming
62 the ledges and deer paths, swooshing low and fast with the
63 heron.

64 I go and talk to him every day.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

65 **CINDY COBLE** is a mother. She likes swimming in Broad
66 Brook year round. Her dog, Tunni, is her best friend. London P.
67 Lippke, 71, of Guilford, died Feb. 7.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

68 0

####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####

69

####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

####BEGIN VIDEO####

70

####END VIDEO####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

####BEGIN LOGLINE####

71

####END LOGLINE####