

## WHAT MATTERS

Hawks muddled disgruntled against hissing snow. Wrens in winter thickets. Swallows carving and swimming and slicing fat grinning summer air. Frozen dew outlining every single blade of grass. Salmonberries blackberries thimbleberries raspberries cloudberries snowberries strawberries blueberries gooseberries. My children learning to read. The sinuous liquid flow of rivers and minks and cats. Fresh bread and waaay too much butter. My children's hands when they cup my ancient grizzled face in their hands. Exuberance and ebullience. Tears of sorrow which are the salt sea of the heart. Sleep in every form from doze to bone-weary. The shivering ache of a saxophone and the yearning of an oboe. Folding laundry hot from the dryer. Cobblers and tailors. A spotless kitchen floor. The way horses smell in spring. Postcards on which the sender has written so much that he or she can barely squeeze in a signature. Opera on the radio. Toothbrushes. The postman's grin. The green sifting powdery snow of cedar pollen on my porch every year. The way a heron labors through the sky with such vast elderly dignity. People who care about hubcaps. The cheerful ears of dogs. All photographs of every sort. Tip-jars. Wineglasses. The way barbers sweep up circles of hair after haircuts. Handkerchiefs. Libraries. Poems read aloud by older poets. Fedoras. Excellent knives. The very *idea* of albatrosses. Thesaurii. The tiny screws that hold spectacles together. Book marginalia done with the lightest possible pencil. People who keep dead languages alive. Wooden rulers. Fresh-mown lawns. First-basemen's mitts. Dishracks. The way my sons smell after their baths. The moons of Jupiter, especially Io. All manner of boats. The fact that our species produced Edmund Burke. Naps of every size. Junior Policemen badges. Walrussssses. Cassocks and surplices. The orphaned caps of long-lost pens. Welcome-mats and ice-cream trucks. All manner of bees. Cabbages and kings. Eulogy and elegy and puppetry. Fingernail-clippers. The rigging of sailing ships. Ironing-boards. Hoes and scythes. The mysterious clips that girls wear in their hair. Boddhisatvas and beauticians. Porters and portmanteaus. Camas and canvas. Bass and bluefish. Furriers and farriers. Trout and grout. Peach pies of any size. The sprawling porches of old hotels and the old men who sprawl upon them. The snoring of children. The burble of owls. The sound of my daughter typing her papers for school in the other room. The sound of my sons wrangling and wrestling and howling and yowling. All sounds of whatever tone and tenor issuing from my children. My children, and all other forms of coupled pain and joy; which is to say everything alive; which is to say all prayers; which is what I am doing.

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*Brian Doyle, Editor*

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