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Timeless

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By Robert York

It was a fine, early spring morning amongst the foothills of Western Oregon’s Willamette Valley. Sunlight streaked across the valley’s wide expanse as the white blossoms of the Wild Cherry and Dogwood trees outshone the pale green buds of the Alder and Maple trees. The recently returned long-winged swallows busily gathered material for their nests.

In a rustic abode near the Sandy River, a man who had risen with the dawn, finished a hearty breakfast and pushed his chair away from an oak table. Entering his study, he reached for the fishing vest from the wooden peg where it was always suspended near the door of the utility porch.

The sound of the water flowing down the steep sides of the cliffs was like beautiful music to the ears of the angler.

The man strode out of the back door onto the verdant green lawn. The fragrant, earthy smells of the forest assailed his nostrils as he gradually worked the kinks out of the expensive Lamiglas rod which had not been used since the previous June. The imaginary casting came closer and closer through the narrow chute. The salmon’s jerking against the egg baited size 1/0 hook shining in the corner of the other women, who fell somewhere in between. He had always felt that a man had to play the cards he had been dealt. Anything else seemed to be unacceptable. Did the course of a man’s fate have to be so unbending? He could only pray that it was not.

The glow of the setting sun cast warm shadows across the canyon walls. A pair of Mergansers, flew swiftly upriver in the elusive style they favored. The slapping tail of a beaver, signaling a warning, came from far downstream. Luminous light reflecting from the silvery sides of the salmon shone into the blue eyes of the angler which were as clear as fresh spring water.

While wrapping the fifty pound test line around his left forearm, he suddenly felt a throbbing pull on the other end of the line. A Spring Chinook Salmon thrashed its muscular body twenty feet beneath the green colored water flowing through the narrow chute. The salmon’s jerking against the egg baited size 1/0 hook shining in the corner of its oval shaped mouth helped to embed the steel snare deeper into the bony jaw of the fish. The angler could feel the power of the fish as the line tore off the spool of the Penn 6000C reel in a smoking blur of blue monofilament. The battle raged back and forth and up and down a hundred yard stretch of the river seemingly designated by both combatants as the best arena available.

Nearly an hour went by before the battle ended. The salmon slowly rolled over onto its side after one last, deep into the fish. As he was deftly loading the forty pound salmon onto his shoulder, he was thinking of the pleasure the guests at his eightieth birthday party would have as they savored the rich flesh of the once noble fish. Thoughts of his friends and family leisurely revolved through his mind as he slowly wound his way homeward.

Half way up the canyon’s passage, the man reached for a Vine Maple’s exposed root. Suddenly, the thick root gave up its grip onto the wall of the cliff. The weight of the salmon threw his balance off and he plunged down the steep slope. Broken and bleeding, he lay unmoving on the shelf of basalt rock. Unplanned threads of thought wove through his memory as he reflected on the experiences that had helped to give meaning to his life; of the women he had loved; of the women she had not loved, who had loved him; of the women he had not loved, who had loved him; and of all the other women, who fell somewhere in between. He had always felt that a man had to play the cards he had been dealt. Anything else seemed to be unacceptable. Did the course of a man’s fate have to be so unbending? He could only pray that it was not.

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