



American Reprieve

Aromas of seared beef and molten cheese
marry the acrid tang of charcoal.
My daughter home between
college graduation and her own nest
searches for perfect turning and timing
announces *dinner*.

My family dines on the deck
cross sections of sweet onion crisp
between our teeth as meat juices
melt into buns slathered with
mustard, ketchup, mayo
our hands slick as we carry dripping
sandwiches mouthward.

It is late September and Indian Summer.
Dusk comes early
choosing a Maxfield Parish palette
the only orange dimming beneath gray coating on coals
where my daughter crouches marshmallow on stick
squinting in the gathering dark.

I squirrel away the evening in this poem
an acorn stored against
forethought of winter.

BEVERLY BREEN
Thetford Center, VT



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