

*George Elliott Clarke*

## **Weymouth Falls**

Weymouth Falls, founded in 1815 by Black Refugees, is a village in Digby County. It is a snowy, northern Mississippi, with blood, not on magnolias, but on pines, lilacs, and apples. This home-spun spiritual is one of its first songs.

I'm sawing a logging song when Timmy gets up, staggers into wet, tobacco blues, and gulps roses from the trumpet, and Shelley, my snug and warm cabin, burns coffee incense in the crooked kitchen temple. I taste steam, maybe her, or Muriel's squash sprouting from the wooden chair. I can see buds on the chair legs, and some are about to flower.

Lincoln takes out life insurance, a bottle of beer, and pours himself a tall, cool policy. Then, Mum hollers, "Praise God, what's all the racket?" Just a gang of drunken angels, ma'am, swimmin' through the thick air of the senses stunned and bangin' into the floor. Some knock on it like it's a door, but if it opens, they'll just plop right into a dark, moist nest of worms; so, we pick 'em up and lay 'em out to dry on beds. Slowly, they resurrect, lookin' more beautiful and not a bit sorry.

Then, muscled Graham, Shakespeare of song, hums through his harmonica, "Wherefore art thou, old Suzanna", and raindrops stream from the ceiling. We think they're musical notes but they're soft and silvery like the tears of innocence. Could it be that God's cryin'?

Graham yells out George Jones, "Sweet moon, sweet moon, shine on!" And I dream Shelley faints; or is it just love? Her heavy breasts weight her down; my arms catch her. We fall, happy.

Maybe someone snaps fingers or the door opens. I am in a whorehouse of raspberries, tonguing these like proverbs or nipples. Red leaks from the roses, pours onto Shelley's full, Negro lips.

Later, Lincoln comes at me out the corner of some music; he climbs over the woodpile with the moon. His weight falls upon my shadow. I laugh and scribble more leaves for Shelley, maple leaves being best for

love notes. Then, Lincoln sways upright, slurps more ridiculousness, while Graham's voice drowns out the bawling stars.

I wake up, not wanting to leave this jungle of blackberries and daisies, wanting to study the candelabra of branches curving to blue sky. So Timmy says, "I told you; look, boy, it ain't no damn good; your feet can't lead your heart astray." And Mum croons, "You and Shelley should be sewed together like Siamese twins." Then, my green-eyed grins crimson joy, her brown skin shimmering like water, light bending through its surface tension like my love.

Too happy, I get drunk and walk on the Sissiboo River, dreaming the bullrushes are strange marijuana, and watching my perfect Cinnamon yodel in the cream of night; and I wanna taste her love, but stare into books, those pools where meaning sinks to the bottom while words ripple; and that's why no two readings are alike. Every breath of being passing over the page is a fresh wind disturbing the surface calm and distorting the meaning below. Close the book, and words seep out, spill, into your mind.

Back at Muriel's, Mousie stands up with her Digby County guitar, its strings pouring into the Sissiboo, and lets her fingers ripple the blue-green river. The guitar frame hulks in sight like the Poor House; its shingles catch and rebuff her tears. Suddenly, a chorus is born: first, a little wail, then, a huge cry, spanked into being by Mousie's own gasps and sobs.

Lincoln starts to get ignorant, so Muriel yells, "Not in my house!", and we go outside, into the summer night hot with dark green. Lincoln falls into the blues:

I know you been lovin' him; mmmmmmm, I can tell  
By your crinkled backbone, your smile that smells.

I fall on a pillow of roses, or Shelley, and roll in her earth like a puppydog:

When a man loves a woman  
Can't think of nothin' else...

Then George Jones bays at the moon, and Buck splashes in from the corner of the page, yelping for attention. And Timmy leaves, slamming the door. And this song is Black literature.