

Gary Metheny

Fish Knife

Fishing was my father's meditation —
silently drifting in his small boat,
his mantra gently lapping
against its sides all morning.

In the afternoon, he would scale, gut,
and clean his catch with a pearl-handled
bowie knife, his fish knife he called it,
although it was a tool with many uses.

When he died, we included with his
obituary a photograph I took of him
holding up a prize largemouth bass,
knowing he would have approved.

Instead of having the fish mounted,
he had my mother pan fry it
that night for dinner to enjoy
with coleslaw, potato salad,
and buttered sweet corn on the cob.

I have the fish knife now, and although
my mantra is different from his,
I feel his energy run through it
when I put it to some good use,
and I sense his presence every time
I cast my line across still waters.

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Shattered

When our 12-year-old nephew
accidentally shattered
the banker's lamp-green bell shade
of our vintage brass floor lamp
with one s

wing
of my Mickey Mantle baseball bat
and stood in silence,
stunned and mortified,
hanging his head, while his eyes
searched the floor for something
to say, I picked up the pieces
of broken glass and forgave him,
while assuring him
that everything was okay.

But since then,
the lamp has quietly stood in the attic,
its bare head bowed at the end
of its long, arching neck,
the empty socket of its only eye
staring blindly at the floor,
trying in vain to shed some light
on what it had done.