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Reading

By Susan Hodara

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I am reading. I have spun into the writer's words, how his grandmother curled and uncurled the telephone cord around her fingers. I remember those curly cords, how the coils unspooled when you walked around, and then jumped back, spiraling in on themselves, hanging like a wonky rubber ringlet.

I read on – a father and his young son, a walk in the woods. I am lying in bed on a Saturday morning, my husband beside me focused on his phone. I am bathing in unfolding sentences, but on the edges I am uneasy. In an instant I might be yanked away. My husband might speak. My phone might ring. Some insistent thought might enter my mind. I cannot shed that fringe of awareness, and so the moment is, once again, diminished.

The story I am reading has given me a few minutes of what I search for: To be present enough to be carried away. To be immersed, lulled, thrilled – by what? What do you call it when a thatch of leafless branches catches the rays of the setting sun and glows? What do you call it when the words that someone else has written mirror what you know is true and show you who you are, and your breath stills?

There is a clamoring mob just beyond: reminders, demands, worries, judgments. They are intent on interrupting, greedy for attention. They will never go away.

But for now, I am still here, reading, trying to read.

Susan Hodara is a journalist, memoirist, editor and teacher. Her articles have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Communication Arts* and more. Her memoirs are published in various anthologies and literary journals. She is a co-author of the collaborative memoir *Still Here Thinking of You: A Second Chance With Our Mothers* (Big Table Publishing, 2013). www.susanhodara.com.

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“A tiled frame of international flags borders the scene, and at the very bottom Franco offers an invitation in bold that suggests my home was never really mine alone: Harlem welcomes . . . THE WORLD.”—@auntiemecca, “New Harlem” (River Teeth 22.2)



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