

Mary's Point

"If we stay out here much longer we won't go back together."

Mary shifted her weight on the rock sending gravel and dirt down into the gorge toward the river. Joe was uneasy sitting beside her--- he'd never seen her quite like this before.

Mary was usually passive, unwilling to chance an opinion, although she held some strong ones.

"You'll never

marry her. She doesn't love you--- I just know it."

"Mary...", Joe's queasy stomach reeled as he twisted, gingerly placing his hand on Mary's shoulder, "Let's go back to the lodge and talk--- I know how you feel, but...."

"No you don't... you see," she smiled lightly, "I'm just worried about you, that's all."

He touched her hot forehead clumsily with his cold, white fingers--- he tried to be warm, but the long hike up to The Point, his vertigo and her decisive mood that had brought him scrambling up to join her stole the blood from his hands, from his head. He stood and stumbled back away from the ledge and toward the trees to catch his breath.

Joe fell to listening. Softly a lightness descended around him, the dappling of late afternoon through the branches above. He was slowly warming--- warming to the quiet chirp in the limbs around, the soft dusky scent of dried needles and new sap. These things seemed suddenly significant.

"This is the worst time of the year to fight with your best friend," he thought.

Early summer,

it's slow breath drying the sweat on his face, stole away his vertigo, that long drop he sensed he'd made by falling in love, but wouldn't undo. "I'll simply tell her the truth. I love Susan. That's all. She'll understand.... we're friends...."

When he returned, Mary was gone. The river moved on beneath the place they'd hung their feet denying anything had ever happened there.