

The Draft

by Charles McLean Redding

Winter

"Do you feel that?"
"God, yes. Where's it coming from?"
"I'm going to get a sweater. I hate this place."
"It's nice. Just... you know. Drafty."
"Drafty and we can't just turn on the heat. No, we have to start a damn wood-fire."
"I'll take care of it."
"Don't bother, it'll be Spring by the time you get it lit."
"Ha ha."
"Here, I think I found it."
"The draft?"
"Feel it? Right here. Under this panel."
"Must lead outside."
"I *hate* this place."

Summer

"How's the party?"
"It's great! Come and join us! What kind of a nerd works during a barbecue?"
"The kind of nerd who works from home and has an emergency to deal with. I'll be out at six."
"Everyone'll have gone *home* by six. What... why are you wearing a sweater?"
"It's chilly in here. Beats the ninety degree heat?"
"It's *amazing* in the ninety degree heat."
"Don't rub it in or anything."
"If I was going to rub it in I'd bring you some of the lemonade."
"Okay, now I definitely can't be having any of *that* while I'm working."
"It's only got a bit of vodka."
"And three kinds of rum."
"Can't you take fifteen minutes? We got this place because of the amazing yard, and you're going to spend our first Summer barbecue cloistered away?"
"Don't blame me. Blame the shippers that keep mangling packages for the office. I'd love to be out there, I keep getting that cold breeze again."
"Murray?"
"Yeah."
"That's so weird. Is it coming from the cellar?"
"If that's the temperature in the cellar, we could probably use it as a walk-in freezer."
"It can't be *that* cold."
"Evidence A: Sweater."
"No wonder you aren't getting any work done. I'm going back out."
"Wait! If you love me, you'll bring me some potato salad."

Autumn

"Murray's back."

"Are you *kidding* me? Of course, first cold night of the year... oh my god it is *so cold!* Where is it coming from?"

"Same wall. But look, I have an idea. We've been meaning to do a little remodeling, right?"

"Yeah, a little... Okay, you're not taking a wall down just before Winter."

"I'm not thinking of taking the *whole* wall down, just... opening it up a little bit."

"Why?"

"So we can plug the hole or wherever it's coming from. We're just going to band-aid in some insulation."

"Why do we have to open up the wall to do that? Can't you just stuff some in the crack?"

"Look, feel this."

"Oh my god!"

"Yep."

"How is the *wall* this cold?!"

"It could be seeping in all around. You know how hard it is to keep this place warm? This could be why. We have to insulate the source before it gets into the walls, not just right here at the crack."

"Okay, whatever, just don't make it worse. And don't make a mess."

"I'll put a tarp down."

Exposed

"Are you taking pictures?"

"I'm taking a video."

"This is so fucked up."

"Can you see the bottom?"

"No, it's pitch black. The night vision on this thing is useless."

"Don't drop it."

"Yeah, thanks."

"Hey... come back."

"I'm right here."

"Just... can you leave it alone? It's freaking me out you leaning over the edge like that is... can you just come back?"

"Okay okay."

"Thank you."

"Heh. Murray."

"God. No kidding, right?"

"Who'd have imagined our little pet draft would turn out to be a--"

"A bottomless pit to hell?"

"--an old well under the house. I'm just glad neither of us fell through the floor. All that moisture..."

"Do *not* joke about that. I'm freaked out enough as it is."

"I mean, this *is* an old house. I wonder if anyone ever did. Ow!"

"Well stop."

"Fine, fine. I just want to try one thing."

"Nooo."

"Don't worry, I'm just gonna... here. I'm gonna drop this down."

"You're gonna lose it."

"Meh. It's a cheap flashlight. Batteries are worth more."

"Just drop a glowstick."

"I don't have a glowstick. Okay, here goes. You want to watch?"

"I'm staying over here, thanks."

"Oh wow."

"Did you see the bottom?"

"Yeah, I think maybe about forty feet down. I heard a splash."

"I didn't hear anything."

"I saw something, too."

"You *need* to stop doing that."

"No, seriously, it looked like there was something stuck in the wall, like, fifteen, maybe twenty feet down. Something *shiny*."

Lure

"This is *insane*. You're insane."

"It's fine! Would you stop worrying? You're freaking out is starting to freak *me* out."

"You *should* be freaked out! You're being insane! You're being a literal crazy person right now."

"I've got a secure line to the rafter, I've got proper climbing gear, and I've rappelled dozens of times, would you *please* just relax."

"It's not worth it."

"What are you *talking* about? You're talking like it's gong to swallow me. It's nothing but a hole in the ground with some water at the bottom. I am a human being who knows what they're doing. Human smart. Hole dumb."

"It's probably just some garbage."

"Yeah, probably. But maybe it's something *interesting*. And if it is: Antiques Roadshow, here we come!"

"If you die doing something this stupid I'm never going to forgive you."

"I'll haunt you just to say you were right. Okay. I'm ready. Line is tied good and tight. Safety line also tied good and tight. Harness is secure."

"Do you need me do be doing something?"

"Yes. There is one thing, and it's really important."

"What is it?"

"I need you to go buy a Ouija board so I can communicate with you from beyond the grave."

"Garden shears to cut the line, you said? Got it."

"Here I go. Hey. Pull the lever."

"What? What lever?!"

"*Wrong leverrrrrrr!*"

Descent

"Goddammit!"

"What?! Are you okay!?"

"No. I mean, yeah, I'm fine, but I dropped my flashlight."

"Don't scare me like that!"

"I'm all good. I got my phone as a back-up."

"Are you done, yet?"

"Almost there. Just a few more feet."

"God it's so dark. I can barely see you."

"Okay... I think I'm close. Hold on... there we go. Let there be light! ... oh, wow."

"What? What is it?"

"It's... yeah. Hold on."

"If you put the light on it, I think I could see it from here."

"No, it's fine. I saw what it is. I think we can leave it alone."

"Okay, you're being vague on purpose."

"Yeah."

"Well what is it? Are you *trying* to freak me out?"

"I'm not trying to... Look. I'm trying *not* to."

"Oh *that's* gonna make me feel less freaked out! Good job there, *Freud!* Now you *have* to tell me."

"Okay, okay. It's a ring."

"A ring? But from you said it sounded more like... *oh my god.*"

"Yeah."

"Is it on a..."

"Yeah."

"And it's just *sticking out of the wall?!!*"

"I'm coming back up now."

"*What the fuck!?!?*"

"It's fine, I'm just gonna leave it and come back-- oh *fuck!*"

"*What?!!*"

"My goddamn cell phone!"

"Jesus! Would you stop dropping shit into the well!"

"It's closer!"

"It what?"

"The water! It's... I think its rising! And it just got... holy shit it is *freezing* all of a sudden!"

"Come back up!"

"Yeah! One sec I gotta get...Oh shit! Shit that's coming up fast!"

"Climb up, stupid!"

"Help me up!"

"What? *What do I do?!?*"

"Just grab the rope and pull me up!"

"*I can't lift you!*"

"Christ the *water* is...! I'm stuck! Hold on I'm... fucking snagged on...OH GOD IT...!!!"

"*David! David! Answer me! I can't lift you! David!*"
