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Jan 3 94 We had visited the grandchildren and their parents over the New Year's weekend. We had taken with us the photographs my brother's new wife had sent for my mother and I at Christmas time.

Family!; what does such a concept mean? To me, until the grandchildren entered our lives, family had been a sometime thing, if non-existent, without a whole lot of meaning. Considering the advent of the 5 billion, and rising, occupying this OH!, so beleaguered planet, and all its attendant pressures upon, not only the planet, but the individual, one seemed to allot little time for something that seemed to yield him little more than the sense of reproduction without end, and without purpose.

The most significant family member to have an impact upon my life was father. My own children impacted my life in ways I had not anticipated.

There have been two other sides to this equation, the less significant 'biological' mother of my children and her family ties; and the most significant person of Charline, who became my wife and mother to the children, and her family ties.

My mother has always been in the background, a stoic presence, who has deserved more.

To add dimension to what is transpiring in these writings, while building the log house in Canada, a letter was traveling from Manhattan, Kansas to Greenwood Lake, New York (the home of my brother's first wife[formerly his home {some fifteen years hence}], to finally come to rest in Eugene, Oregon, containing a request from another bearing the name Durchanek, wondering if there was a connection (almost certain there was).

Periodically, I have sifted through the photographic remains of my father's life (the very few existing photos, most having been destroyed in an all-consuming fire of my father's home in upstate New York [most of the record that exists in my possession was in my hands before the fire]). I have sitting above my computer keyboard table a photograph showing my father when he was eight or nine with his mother and father. The photograph was placed there, because my grandmother reminds me of my daughter who, at this writing, is the same age as my grandmother when she died. I harbor a special fondness for my daughter, perhaps what a father may be fortunate enough to feel for his daughter.

Upon returning from the New Year's trip to visit the grandchildren, another letter from Manhattan, Kansas, was waiting in the mail for me. The letter contained the same amount of certainty as the first. It also contained copies of documents which not in the least corroborated her deductions with regard to any genetic linkage between us. However one sensed her yearning to discover some extended family in this land, barren

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of love. Perhaps the yearning allows one to imagine things that, in the absence of proof or disproof, may never be discovered as to their real truth.

Setting all considerations aside, or perhaps allowing them their subtle persuasive powers, the series of happenings have come to stir more than questions in me. The exposure to the feelings of others whose intention is to bring together and share something that resides reservedly and tenderly within, has inadvertently found place in my consciousness. What is the impetus? Perhaps a vague curiosity, perhaps some willing admission that grows out of the exposure; Yeah!, I like what's happening. But how do this thing without having all the rest of the crap that surfaces from within the human labyrinth? How not find confirmed in 'family' all that which disgusts us in the balance of protoplasmic humanity; and if confirmed, how avoid?

Well, there are relationships, and there are relationships, and for many 'family' means family horror; the horror of familiarity and vulnerability.

The lady in Manhattan, Kansas, the brother's wife in Holyoke, Massachusetts, the daughter, and her daughter, in Portland, Oregon, the son's family in Klamath Falls, Oregon, (and Charline, because of who and what she is, who makes something more possible than would ever be the case if allowed to reside within me alone), have all come together in a short span of time, in my more idle moments, as my own life stands precariously near its terminus.

The son's oldest daughter (seven) began to cry in Charline's arms as we were leaving and saying our goodbyes, after our New Year's stay.

As Charline and I were attempting to decipher (translate) the two documents (copies of birth certificates) that arrived with the letter from Kansas, we suddenly found ourselves intrigued with what was happening. One document was printed in both Czech and German, and what we could not translate with the Czech/English dictionary we somehow managed with the German/English dictionary. After satisfying ourselves with what the documents purported to announce, Charline had gone off to the local video store to rent a movie for the evening. While she was gone I pursued a little further what we had been investigating in the dictionaries, since I had them on the table. I retrieved two of the photographs showing gravestones, presumably of close family members of father's, now lying buried somewhere in Czechoslovakia, Austria, (or Germany?). One word appearing upon the gravestone, the letters of which were carved in Czech, escaped direct translation, but bore with it a suggestion that moved the poetic sense in me, that revealed a cultural outlook to me, that showed me something about language that cannot ever be forgotten or should never be ignored. The lexicographer had grasped, and translated into English a word, that we in this anointed derivative American world full of jargon, and

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cliche, and media-speak; and more disastrously fail to express because we do not possess the depth of soul, or perhaps human capacity to encompass. The exact word had not appeared upon the gravestone (part of which I had difficulty deciphering), but the root lie there both upon the stone and within the dictionary. Clear enough to me was a meaning that does not ring well when one says "dearly departed", although these might be the only words of which one may avail himself when a loved one is no longer. 'Dearly departed' is not a term I would want applied to myself, even if it was all that was available in the lexicon of expressions reserved for the occasion.

But to utter 'last touch' as invocation to a life that occupied hearts instead of space is the more wanted expression.