

# King of Swords

by [Robert Beveridge](#) (August 2024)



My Father (Alberto Gomez, 2001)

My sophomore American Lit professor  
came to the open reading one night  
and in a sweater vest and khakis  
read us a poem about how he took  
ordnance out into the woods  
and tracked deer by their spoor,  
the bent and broken foliage  
in woods so deep the sun  
was considered a guest

who'd worn out their welcome.

The rest of us clapped, convinced  
we had written the poem  
that would end world hunger  
or war or students' inability  
to follow along with Calculus I,  
polite, dismissive, closed.

That was thirty-five years ago.  
I just turned fifty-three. Two nights ago,  
as I made a burrito, I realized  
that sometime in the past few months  
I'd begun to value iceberg lettuce  
in a way I never could before.

There wasn't much distinctive  
about that burrito. The seasoning  
was from an envelope, the cheese  
was pre-shredded. But when I sat down  
and bit into it, the crunch  
from that plain iceberg lettuce  
was cold, crisp, a perfect balance  
to melted cheese and meat so hot  
steam rose where my teeth had been  
an instant before.

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Robert Beveridge makes noise ([xterminal.bandcamp.com](http://xterminal.bandcamp.com)) and writes poetry on unceded Mingo land (Akron, OH). He published his first poem in a non-vanity/non-school publication in November 1988, and it's been all downhill since.

Recent/upcoming appearances in *Utriculi*, *Yawp*, and *Leaf by Leaf*, among others.

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