

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) 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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