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Shingles, An Open Notebook

Rich Ives

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SHINGLES, AN OPEN NOTEBOOK

For the last few days a woman has been walking by the hole in the street where a man is working. She comes by in the morning just after the man disappears down the hole and in the evening just before he reappears and begins rearranging his yellow defense system. Each time she walks by the hole she stops for a moment and looks to see what is in there. Always the man is there waiting, posing for a painting of the noble working man.

Another man sits on the porch of the white house closest to the hole in the street. He props a pen against his cheek and gazes quietly out into the street. Sometimes he writes something in a notebook.

Evening. Faint streaks of pink are beginning to stretch out from the horizon, illuminating the soft bellies of clouds. The air is calm and quiet. People are eating. The woman has come and gone as usual but the man has not yet climbed up out of his hole.

The man on the porch nods. Every few minutes he jerks, sits up straight, and again stares attentively toward the street. The pink bellies streak and begin to darken.

Morning. Two men drop yellow rubber dunce caps around the hole in the street and set up more yellow railings. They back a large motor mounted on a squat, yellow trailer up to the hole. They slide a large yellow tube into the hole and start the motor.

Late afternoon. The dunce caps, the motor, and the two men are gone. The yellow railing and an orange lunchbox remain. The man on the porch appears with a glass of lemonade. Leaving his notebook on the porch, he wanders out into the street carrying the lemonade. He leans on the yellow railing and peers down into the hole. He looks around to see if anyone is watching. He climbs down into the hole.

The woman is early. She gazes into the hole. Someone has stolen the painting. She looks up and notices the empty porch. She walks over to it. She notices the open notebook and begins reading. She sits

down. Cloud bellies darken. She leans her head back and closes her eyes.

Morning. The chugging of the yellow motor. More dunce caps. Two men are joking loudly. The woman on the porch murmurs and jerks awake. Leaving the notebook, she walks out into the street. She talks with the two men. She gestures with her hands as she speaks. The two men laugh loudly. She returns to the porch and begins writing in the notebook.

Noon. The two men and the yellow motor are gone. The woman wanders out into the street and gazes into the hole. She looks to see if anyone is watching. She climbs down into the hole.

I put the last shingle in place, climb down off the roof, and walk over to the porch. I pick up the notebook and begin searching. I begin rocking back and forth.

Slowly, motions begins in the street. Next door a man climbs onto the roof and begins replacing shingles.