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For David S.

What others criticize you for, cultivate.

—Jean Cocteau

Imagine: a tightening in the throat, blue books, and a mother who is dead. This blue house, blue-roofed, holds all remaining memory and ten thousand beloved volumes. The long, low automobile sleeps under its cover of snow tinted blue, and the fire speaks, a steady murmuring: voices of the dead, women who first caressed your ear with lovely words, magic words, words lifted into song from the dense, mysterious, printed page. The meal is spread upon the table. The bottle of dark, southern wine breathes on an oaken sideboard, heirloom of remembering. Lost in the warmth of this winter's night, you feel again familiar presences, open a book, touch blue pages. From the photograph on the wall, a tender glance. In your ear, the voices murmuring.

Rick Newby