

14 Desmond Avenue
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January 5, 2015

Dear Arthur,

You're very much on my mind these days. I hear from Susan and Richard that you're in rehab after a fall, with varying prospects of returning to your home. As dreary as home may have seemed to you, I'm sure you'd rather be there.

So of course I turn to *Dictations* for a concentrated draught of Arthur Boyars at his best—an extraordinary volume indeed. It occurs to me that the first of the new poems (from 2003) was written barely a year before we first met, and that I've now known you for a decade. Reading the poems again reminds me of how intense a decade it's been. Certainly among the high points, for me at least, have been the evenings at our dining room table culminating in your poetry readings. You are now implicated in a rich layering of memories that include good food, good friends, and significant conversation in which you played a major part, and wouldn't have happened without you. Not bad for an octogenarian. And I suspect I'm not the only one who feels this way.

Not to mention our occasional nights at the movies topped off by a wee shot of Auchtoshan. And we seem to have liked and disliked the same movies! *La Princesse de Montpensier*, yes. *American Hustle*, absolutely not.

But it's always a big question, every time we say goodbye to you: Will you ever be back? The question looms larger with every six months and every year that passes. And the answer is, and has been: Probably not. Improbably, so far at least, you keep returning. The final reckoning gets postponed, at least for now.

Know that you're not forgotten, Arthur. You come up in conversation all the time—with George, with Paul, with Becky, with Susan and Richard. And if I have my say, you never will be. Let me quote, from Arthur Boyars opus XXXVI:

The soldier looks on, all attention,
His longsword straddling his shoulder,
Waiting for some irregularity;

He need not worry, there is no escape
From such good nails!
He does not see, looking upward,
The Angels waiting for the act to end,

The scene on earth a prelude to Eternity.

You never know what truth resides in art.

Fondly,

