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Reckoning for Edward Abbey, One of the Founders of Earth First! And Author of *Desert Solitaire* and *The Monkeywrench Gang*

Hugh R. Tribbey

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Reckoning for Edward Abbey,

ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF EARTH FIRST! AND AUTHOR OF *DESERT SOLITAIRE* AND *THE MONKEYWRENCH GANG*

Larna takes our two scrapping kids,
as an act of mercy,
to a Van Damme double feature
so I can get my grading done.
Sprawled on the bed,
I stoically lift each leaden page
of improvised analysis,
freshman insight into the Romantic lyric,
case studies in years
of compulsory miseducation,
intimations of a bad future
for the kids. I'm rehashing
petty departmental turf wars
by the time I finish.
With a bad taste in my mouth
for my species,
I light a Cuesta Rey,
channel surf to a fishing show
and the soothing babble
of huckster good ole' boys.
When they cut
to a commercial for Eagle Claws,
I hear the wind
raid our subdivision,
set the rafters moaning.

Heat, dust, light, broad spaces in it.
The kids will return with grit in their hair,
will wash out enough to dip a miner's pan.
I remember Uncle Jaspers' ranch
by the North Canadian.
Pastures, gullies, cliffs there
don't see hominids for months at a stretch.

My fanatic cigar purifies itself to ash
while the wind sends the house
on wagon axles across the prairie,
the old antenna wire slapping
the living room window,
the storm door rocking and creaking.

Ed Abbey loved cigars. His last trip
down the Colorado, he must have mashed
a soggy stub between his teeth
though that stretch was almost gentle,
the rapids more spectacular than dangerous
because he'd discovered he was sick
and wouldn't be better. At what point did
his age, his sickness, the late autumn
convince him the emptiness
behind the cliff's face, under white water,
wasn't the dunes' soft erasure,
and so couldn't comfort him
as the wind lulls me?
It became his first wife
who died in New York.
He left her body at the hospital
to walk the city streets
with a loaded .45 in his coat,
in a rage to deliver
his reckoning for
a poisoned world.

I have shower duty tonight:
Seth will forget his towel, will
forget to rinse the tub,
Hannah must have the temperature just so.

His last time down the rushing Colorado,
Abbey wanted his latest wife and the first one,
he wanted the few people he trusted.

by Hugh R. Tribbey