

Susan

MEMOIR: THE COLOR ROOM BY JAMES GOEDKOOP

8: #2

Note: Pages are extracted from the middle of the story.

* We want to know your emotional reaction to everything

Summary: I was born into a prominent Dutch family. My parents moved to the United States in the early 1950s, during a decline in our fortunes. The shipyards had been destroyed by the Nazis, rebuilt, but then, like a recovering patient with underlying conditions, died a painful death in front of us. My mother's father's wealth, of mysterious origins, was lost before my generation came of age. My brothers and I grew up in the Ramapo Hills of Rockland County, New York—a strange place, hardly a stone's throw from New York City.

This is from a chapter "The Color Room" which starts when I'm 18 but includes recollections as I experience them on my walk one winter day.

Comment [s1]: Too allegorical. Also, how did the shipyards affect your family?

On an early Monday morning when I was 18, January 1973, age eighteen, I put a plate on the table and glanced toward the ovens, to see if anything was on fire. A ribbon of smoke, split from the white billows, slipped by the edge of the hood and rose to the ceiling. We had cobbled the hood from scrap plywood one whiskey-whiskey-fueled night a few years earlier. Teeth clenched, my father had driven the last fastener in the wall and stood back to appraise the work. He said, "Voortreffelijk," a complimentary Dutch term, and then snapped back into English, "Now, for the final touch." Standing on the Tappan gas range, black Goodyear-soled motorcycle boot right on the grill, my brother John's last session ended—not long after it began. He climbed down and swung the handle of the ball-pein hammer into my hand. "Here," he said, then added, "This is about the dumbest thing". We had pounded the surface into dimples—too deep in some spots, less in others—but as we neared the end of the project, the little craters were uniform, like on a golf ball. My father raised his eyes in sardonic appreciation. My mother laughed in delight. We sprayed the cratered surface with Krylon bright copper.

Comment [s2]: I think adding the "s" at the end is a New England thing...I do it all the time but I don't think it's supposed to be there.

Comment [s3]: Start the chapter here, in the past. Then come into the present. Then break up the paragraph and add what you need to make it a complete scene. But for each time someone speaks, start a new paragraph.

Comment [s4]: Is this the right word?

Comment [s5]: ?

Comment [s6]: Your father or brother?

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Powering the hood, a heavy black fan powered the hood, a relic from a surplus vendor on Canal Street and thick with grease, not from its re-purposed life in our kitchen, but from some former service, chirped like a hoarse bird with every slow turn. The two stoves sat side by side. They weren't for decoration. My mother used both ovens and all eight burners—gas for some things, electric for others. She cooked artful meals: Indonesian rijstaffel—a complex mix of delicacies adapted by the Dutch in colonial times; Boerenkool met worst—curly kale, mashed potatoes and rookworst; boiled beef tongue, pressure cooked artichokes, razor thin crepes, delicate almond pastry and many more.

But I could lay out a pound of bacon in the electric oven and have it done in no time. I sat on the kitchen bench, a utility piece well suited to the surroundings. It was a simple thing made of two separated beams that served as seating, supported by angled rough hewn legs, like a sideways shave horse. It was comfortable despite the gap, moreover, unlike any other seat, it allowed the sheath of a sizable knife to hang unimpeded between the stretchers without twisting one's belt loop. This bench was paired with a heavy farmer-type table made of oak; its surface of three glued-up wooden slabs suffered deep gouges and random hacked-in designs from those knives. My brothers and I had twenty or thirty each. I preferred the Puma White Hunter 6377, bone scales, front and rear quillons.

Comment [s7]: This is where you can bring the reader to the present. Having just two sentences at the beginning of the chapter in the present and then jumping to the past for so long is confusing.

Some years before, at Heymans' Army-Navy store in Suffern, a certain knife had caught my attention. Behind the counter, Mr. Heyman, eyed me with suspicion. He and

Comment [s8]: Maybe insert a sentence here that will explain the following paragraphs, such as "I've had my share of knife stabbings" or something like that...

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his twin ran the place. They were indistinguishable and equally ~~##-ill-~~tempered, so, in any meaningful sense to a twelve-~~year-year-~~old, it didn't matter which one it was. I lowered my glance and turned down the aisle, towards my brother John. Without need of words, he assessed the situation and came over to inspect the knife. The two of us shuffled around, backs to the counter, obscuring Mr. Hymen's view. John appeared suspicious of the quality. Gripping the handle, he viewed the blade with a concerned expression, flipped it and pointed to the stamp on the blade near the haft. In small letters, it said, "Made in Japan." He looked at me, shook his head, and then gestured to the knife he was holding. It said, "Made in Germany." Continuing his unbroken focus, he nodded.

Familiar with Tolkien, I had a thin, double-edged dagger, like an Arkansas Toothpick, with transparent green plastic handles and imbedded designs like core swirls in a marble. I referred to it as the "Elfin Dagger." Joost had a huge Bowie of gleaming stainless. This knife (confiscated some years later by a State Trooper in New Mexico) featured a bulbous handle of wrapped rawhide. In terms of respect, it stood alone among our knives, not only because of its seniority and fearsome presence, but because Joost had filed it out from a piece of raw bar stock—blade, blood gutter and all.

Comment [s9]: ? No idea who Joost is

There was an old wooden door made of solid planks, flat on the ground around back, near the porch. It must ~~-have~~ sealed one of the furniture crates from Holland. John and I used it for mumble-peg, a game played barefoot. We were then eight or ten and he explained the rules of the game: He said, "Stand over there." We stood four feet apart.

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“Now, make a bet on how many times I can stick the knife between your feet.”

“Three,” I said.

He threw the knife. It stuck close to my left foot.

“Now,” (as he jerked it out), “move your foot there and I’ll try again. If I can do it two more times, I win. If I hit your foot, you win. If you chicken out, I win.”

We had few mishaps. I remember one—and it involved inexperienced friends, not my brothers.

Comment [s10]: See how I broke out this paragraph? Much easier for the reader to follow. Dialogue should always appear as a new paragraph every time someone speaks.

A group of us were camping on the island. Things were uncontrolled: knives flying, whining in deflected, spinning trajectories, when one sunk into my ankle.

I thought, “goddammit, one of mine!” I looked over the campfire. The bastard didn’t even have his own knives. The single piece red-handled throwing knife, now embedded in my ankle, was one of three: green, red and blue, coming from my matched set. The plastic sheath was ganged with staggered slots for quick retrieval and the jackass had that (which was empty) on his belt.

One summer, Joost designated an immense tree in the pine-woods as the “knife-throwing tree.” It was a two-stemmed white pine, perhaps five foot in diameter, and we sent hunting knives, pocket-knives, hatchets, axes and tomahawks sailing into that tree. Bark, splinters and ricocheting weapons flew off in all directions. Joost then hung an immense log in front of the knife-throwing tree. The moving target swung like a pendulum.

Susan

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In the pre-dawn light, I bit into my bacon sandwich and gazed out the window. *yum*
Everyone was asleep. With saws, axes and hand tools, my parents had cleared an expanse of woods the size of a football field behind the house. I could now make out the heavy trolley cable crossing the field from the tree-house, the lake a hundred yards out, and beyond that, the silhouette of the distant Ramapo Hills.

Standing up, I stepped backwards over the bench, loosened my belt, and rearranged the ten-inch knife, so that the blade, within its leather sheath, was now tucked in my right rear pocket and hidden from view. With belt cinched and shirttails out, I was ready to address the day—much the same as I would address any other day. It wasn't any form of concealment or subterfuge, but one of discretion. Three months later, I would fly to New Mexico with the Puma.

Economy was full and I got bumped to first class. With the entire row to myself, I slipped my buckle pin, pulled the White Hunter loose and set it on the seat next to me. I looked up at the stewardess. She surveyed the passengers with *one* hand on her hip, the other on an empty headrest and in time, looked in my direction, expressionless. One eye, a little misaligned, suggested that she appraised something else—maybe the passenger behind, it was impossible to tell, but then, she shifted her attention to the seat occupied by the knife and giggled.

Buddha (the dog) sat on her window-height table watching for squirrels. I gave

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her a kiss, and passing through the entry-way, snatched my coat from the pile of old clothing, boots and artifacts, and stepped into the cold air.

I preferred Camel, non-filters. That's what my father smoked. My mother had smoked Parliaments for a while, but so as not to create a bad example, quit when we were young.

My father and I were in the living room. The fire was roaring. There were guests around, but for a moment, the two of us sat uninterrupted, staring at the reflections of the flames on the polished surface of the marble table, glasses of whiskey. There was an odd wooden cigarette server from Japan with a lever actuated wooden duck that grabbed a short, standard non-filter. It made a springing noise, twanging like a haiku or something. I said,

"Pop, I wonder, maybe it isn't a good idea?" I was seventeen then and thinking about quitting. My timing must have been bad or maybe it was the social context or maybe the bourbon.

He frowned and said, "Hegh" (a Dutch expression, or perhaps one unique to him), "All men smoke."

Your writing is good-no issues there. It's a bit hard to comment when I haven't seen the setup of the rest of the book, but with just this chapter, my comment is that I think you should present this all in chronological order. It was kind of confusing for me to continually switch back and forth between past and present. Also-and more importantly-you have a story chapter in each of your paragraphs. A chapter describing the incident at the camp. A chapter describing stealing the knives at the store. Etc. Your

Comment [s11]: Tell us this at the beginning of the paragraph

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memoir could start at the very beginning and go in chronological order. A memoir doesn't mean that you should be telling-which a lot of this is-it is showing, just as it would be in fiction. You have great material here and you're a good writer; I'd love to see you expand this in chronological order.

Keep writing!

JULIE

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What walk?

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✓+

Why?

session?

What?

JULIE

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"But" contrasting with what?

But I could lay out a pound of bacon in the electric oven and have it done in no time. I sat on the kitchen bench, a utility piece well suited to the surroundings. It was a simple thing made of two separated beams that served as seating, supported by angled rough-hewn legs, like a sideways shave horse. It was comfortable despite the gap, moreover, unlike any other seat, it allowed the sheath of a sizable knife to hang unimpeded between the stretchers without twisting one's belt loop. This bench was paired with a heavy farmer type table made of oak; its surface of three glued-up wooden slabs suffered deep gouges and random hacked-in designs from those knives. My brothers and I had twenty or thirty each. I preferred the Puma White Hunter 6377, bone scales, front and rear quillons.

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What happened?
Did you complain
to store owner?
Buy knife/knives?

?

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- scene!

Back to furniture
wells?

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Back to the kitchen?

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7!

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from when?
why?

3 months later?
\$ start?

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giggled?
why?

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More?

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segue?

topic sentences

I preferred Camel, non-filters. That's what my father smoked. My mother had smoked Parliaments for a while but so ^{as} not to ^{set} create a bad example, quit when we were young. My father and I were in the living room. The fire was roaring. There were guests around but for a moment, the two of us sat uninterrupted, staring at the reflections of the flames on the polished surface of the marble table, glasses of whiskey. There was an odd wooden cigarette server from Japan with a lever actuated wooden duck that grabbed a short, standard non-filter. It made a springing noise, twanging like a haiku or something. I said, "Pop, I wonder, maybe it isn't a good idea?" I was seventeen then and thinking about quitting. My timing must have been bad or maybe it was the social context or maybe the bourbon. He frowned and said, "Heh" (a Dutch expression, or perhaps one unique to him), "All men smoke."

move 1st 3 sentences here

HAIKU

HAIKU ARE POEMS THAT MAKE NO SOUNDS EXCEPT FOR THE PRAISE THEY MERIT

WAY IS THE CHAPTER CALLED "THE COLOR ROOM"? THERE'S NO MENTION OF COLOR.

I KNOW THAT MEMOIRS ARE OFTEN STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS, BUT THIS EXCERPT SEEMS DISJOINTED. THERE'S SOME NICE WRITING HERE, BUT IT SEEMS A BIT STILTED. INCLUDE MORE DIALOGUE.

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Ed

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This is from a chapter "The Color Room" which starts when I'm 18 but includes recollections as I experience them on my walk one winter day.

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can be present or past tense

Past

range

why?

how?

of what?

had become

dimple

- needs a glossary
- all over the place, and time.
- the people aren't very important
- a memoir is people: there aren't any interactions

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bacon

bench

table

knives

store

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was what's land?
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ankle, was one of three green, red and blue, coming from my matched set. The plastic
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was empty on his belt.

reaction to the person?
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throwing tree." It was a two-stemmed white pine, perhaps five foot in diameter and we
sent hunting knives, pocket-knives, hatchets, axes and tomahawks sailing into that tree.
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immense log in front of the knife-throwing tree. The moving target swung like a
pendulum.

end of game
tree
sandwich
Why?
In the pre-dawn light, I bit into my bacon sandwich and gazed out the window.
Everyone was asleep. With saws, axes and hand tools, my parents had cleared an expanse
of woods the size of a football field behind the house. I could now make out the heavy

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trolley cable[?] crossing the field from the tree-house, the lake a hundred yards out, and beyond that the silhouette of the distant Ramapo Hills.

Standing up, I stepped backwards over the bench, loosened my belt, and re-arranged the ten-inch knife so that the blade, within its leather sheath, was now tucked in my right rear pocket and hidden from view. ^{why?} With belt cinched and shirttails out, I was ready to address the day—much the same as I would address any other day. It wasn't any form of concealment or subterfuge, but one of discretion. Three months later, I would fly to New Mexico with the Puma.

Kitchen

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airplane

and so...

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On an early Monday morning, January 1973, age eighteen, I put a plate on the table and glanced towards the ovens, to see if anything was on fire. A ribbon of smoke, split from the white billows, slipped by the edge of the hood and rose to the ceiling. We had clobbered the hood from scrap plywood one whiskey fueled night a few years earlier. Teeth clenched, my father had driven the last fastener in the wall and stood back to appraise the work. "*Voortreffelijk*," he said, a complimentary Dutch term, and then he snapped back into English, "Now, for the final touch."

Standing on the Tappan gas range, black Goodyear-soled motorcycle boot right on the grill, my brother John's last session ended—not long after it began. He climbed down and swung the handle of the ball-pein hammer into my hand. "Here," he said, then added, "This is about the dumbest thing."

We had pounded the surface into dimples—too deep in some spots, less in others but as we neared the end of the project, the little craters were uniform, like on a golf ball. My father raised his eyes in sardonic appreciation. My mother laughed in delight. We sprayed the cratered surface with Krylon bright copper.

Comment [1]: While this is an incredibly interesting background, I don't have a sense of what the memoir is about. The tough thing about a memoir is a great story isn't enough. You have to think about what a memoir is going to offer to people who haven't experienced what you've experienced, what about your story is a universal. From this summary, I can't tell.

Comment [2]: The use of the plural ovens makes me think you're in a professional kitchen, and hence at work. Clarify that you're at home.

Comment [3]: Not sure this is the correct word.

Comment [4]: For clarity, foreign words are generally italicized, so the reader instantly knows it's not just an English word s/he didn't know.

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Comment [5]: I'm confused here. What session? Session of what?

Comment [6]: Your brother? Perhaps add names to tags to make clearer.

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Comment [7]: Make sure you use paragraphs for clarity.

MEMOIR: THE COLOR ROOM BY JAMES GOEDKOOP

Powering the hood, a heavy black fan, a relic from a surplus vendor on Canal Street and thick with grease, not from its re-purposed life in our kitchen but from some former service, chirped like a hoarse bird with every slow turn. The two stoves sat side by side. They weren't for decoration. My mother used both ovens and all eight burners—gas for some things, electric for others. She cooked artful meals: Indonesian *rijstaffel*—a complex mix of delicacies adapted by the Dutch in colonial times; *Boerenkool met worst*—curly kale, mashed potatoes and *rookworst*; boiled beef tongue, pressure-cooked artichokes, razor thin crepes, delicate almond pastry and many more.

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But I could lay out a pound of bacon in the electric oven and have it done in no time. I sat on the kitchen bench, a utility piece well suited to the surroundings. It was a simple thing made of two separated beams that served as seating, supported by angled rough hewn legs, like a sideways shave horse. It was comfortable despite the gap, moreover, unlike any other seat, it allowed the sheath of a sizable knife to hang unimpeded between the stretchers without twisting one's belt loop. This bench was paired with a heavy farmer-type table made of oak; its surface of three glued-up wooden slabs suffered deep gouges and random hacked-in designs from those knives. My brothers and I had twenty or thirty each. I preferred the Puma White Hunter 6377, bone scales, front and rear quillons.

Comment [8]: What is this "but" in contrast too?

Comment [9]: You haven't really placed us in the room. You're describing things in isolation, so I can't get a solid grip on what is where.

Some years before, at Heymans' Army-Navy store in Suffern, a certain knife caught my attention. Behind the counter, Mr. Heyman, eyed me with suspicion. He and his twin ran the place. They were indistinguishable and equally ill tempered so, in any

Comment [10]: We are well into this chapter and while your descriptions are quite beautiful, I don't see what they're adding up to. They're simply descriptions with no plot, no story.

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meaningful sense to a twelve-year old, it didn't matter which Mr. Heyman it was. I lowered my glance and turned down the aisle, towards my brother John. Without need of words, he assessed the situation and came over to inspect the knife. The two of us shuffled around, backs to the counter, obscuring Mr. ^eHymen's view. John appeared suspicious of the quality. Gripping the handle, he viewed the blade with a concerned expression, flipped it and pointed to the stamp on the blade near the haft. In small letters, it said, "Made in Japan." He looked at me, shook his head, and then gestured to the knife he was holding. It said, "Made in Germany." Continuing his unbroken focus, he nodded,

Comment [11]: Lovely.

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Familiar with Tolkien, I had a thin, double-edged dagger, like an Arkansas Toothpick, with transparent green plastic handles and imbedded designs like core swirls in a marble. I referred to it as the "Elfin Dagger." Joost had a huge Bowie of gleaming stainless. This knife (confiscated some years later by a State Trooper in New Mexico) featured a bulbous handle of wrapped rawhide. In terms of respect, it stood alone among our knives, not only because of its seniority and fearsome presence, but because Joost had filed it out from a piece of raw bar stock—blade, blood gutter and all.

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Comment [12]: For those of us not familiar with Tolkien, this doesn't make a lot of sense.

Comment [13]: Now this is a story I'd like to hear! Perhaps remove this because it distracts us and wants us to know things you're not telling us.

Comment [14]: I'm not sure where this digression about the knives is telling us.

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There was an old wooden door made of solid planks, flat on the ground around back, near the porch. It must have sealed one of the furniture crates from Holland. John and I used it for mumble-peg, a game played barefoot. We were then eight or ten and he explained the rules of the game: "Stand over there," he said. We stood four feet apart.

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"Now, make a bet on how many times I can stick the knife between your feet."

"Three," I said.

He threw the knife. It stuck close to my left foot. "Now," (as he jerked it out),

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MEMOIR: THE COLOR ROOM BY JAMES GOEDKOOP

“move your foot there and I’ll try again. If I can do it two more times, I win. If I hit your foot, you win. If you chicken out, I win.”

We had few mishaps. I remember one **but** it involved inexperienced friends, not my brothers. A group of us were camping on the island. Things were uncontrolled: knives flying, whining in deflected, spinning trajectories when one sunk into my ankle. I thought, “**Goddammit**, one of mine!” I looked over the campfire. The bastard didn’t even have his own knives. The single piece red-handled throwing knife, now imbedded in my ankle, was one of three: green, red and blue, coming from my matched set. The plastic sheath was ganged with staggered slots for quick retrieval and the jackass had that (which was empty) on his belt.

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Comment [15]: More than one brother?

Comment [16]: What island? What are the circumstances? How old were you that you were doing this alone? You’re skating over a lot of the detail.

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Comment [17]: What came of this? Did it do permanent damage? You don’t need to always tell the entire story (although it can help), but you need to give the critical details.

One summer, Joost designated an immense tree in the pine-woods as the “knife-throwing tree.” It was a two-stemmed white pine, perhaps five foot in diameter and we sent hunting knives, pocket-knives, hatchets, axes and tomahawks sailing into that tree. Bark, splinters and ricocheting weapons flew off in all directions. Joost then hung an immense log in front of the knife-throwing tree. The moving target swung like a pendulum.

Comment [18]: What does this paragraph add to the narrative?

In the pre-dawn light, I bit into my bacon sandwich and gazed out the window. Everyone was asleep. With saws, axes and hand tools, my parents had cleared an expanse of woods the size of a football field behind the house. I could now make out the heavy trolley cable crossing the field from the tree-house, the lake a hundred yards out, and beyond that the silhouette of the distant Ramapo Hills.

Comment [19]: We’re moving around enough that I’m a bit lost in time.

Comment [20]: Why?

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Standing up, I stepped backwards over the bench, loosened my belt, and rearranged the ten-inch knife so that the blade, within its leather sheath, was now tucked in my right rear pocket and hidden from view. With belt cinched and shirttails out, I was ready to address the day—much the same as I would address any other day. It wasn't any form of concealment or subterfuge, but one of discretion. Three months later, I would fly to New Mexico with the Puma.

Comment [21]: Whoa is this a jump from where we started!

Economy was full and I got bumped to first class. With the entire row to myself, I slipped my buckle pin, pulled the White Hunter loose and set it on the seat next to me. I looked up at the stewardess. She surveyed the passengers with one hand on her hip, the other on an empty headrest and in time, looked in my direction, expressionless. One eye, a little misaligned, suggested that she appraised something else—maybe the passenger behind, it was impossible to tell, but then, she shifted her attention to the seat occupied by the knife and giggled.

Comment [22]: What are we supposed to take away from this scene?

Buddha (the dog) sat on her window-height table watching for squirrels. I gave her a kiss, and passing through the entry-way, snatched my coat from the pile of old clothing, boots and artifacts, and stepped into the cold air.

Comment [23]: Whose table?

I preferred Camel, non-filters. That's what my father smoked. My mother had smoked Parliaments for a while but so not to create a bad example, quit when we were

MEMOIR: THE COLOR ROOM BY JAMES GOEDKOOP

young. My father and I were in the living room. The fire was roaring. There were guests around but for a moment, the two of us sat uninterrupted, staring at the reflections of the flames on the polished surface of the marble table, glasses of whiskey. There was an odd wooden cigarette server from Japan with a lever-actuated wooden duck that grabbed a short, standard non-filter. It made a springing noise, twanging like a haiku or something. I said, "Pop, I wonder, maybe it isn't a good idea?" I was seventeen then and thinking about quitting. My timing must have been bad or maybe it was the social context or maybe the bourbon. He frowned and said, "*Hegh*" (a Dutch expression, or perhaps one unique to him), "All men smoke."

Comment [24]: While this sounds pretty, a haiku doesn't twang.

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Hi James,

The writing in this piece is downright lovely. You have a masterful turn of phrase and I enjoyed the flow of the sentences. Your descriptions are evocative.

My big issue with this memoir is the lack of narrative. If this is to be a traditional memoir, it needs a structure, a story to it. This feels like a random assortment of recollections that don't add up to anything. A memoir needs to have a universal draw, something that the reader feels like s/he can relate to. As this is, it's more a thought cloud, a jumble of your recollections. It feels more like a prose poem than a memoir.

I think you need to figure out what the overarching point is of your life story, what you want the takeaway to be. From there, you can create a cohesive story. It doesn't need to be a straight, linear story, but it's important that the reader know where s/he is in time/place and understand why something is being told.

You seem to have a lot to work with, and I'm sure you can shape this into a firm story!

best,
Jennifer

MEMOIR: THE COLOR ROOM BY JAMES GOEDKOOP

James—

The segment here is like a collection of nice children's play blocks in a bag. There might be something here, but it needs some organization and flow. The memories are, in and of themselves, enough to begin a story. But, at this point, the blurbs are disjointed and slow, rather than gain interest. It's not for the reader to connect the dots. That's the writer's job and art. Samples here. Flashes of interesting situations. But, that's all they are.

If you can take this effort and consider it an outline, or check list of things you'd like to elaborate on, you would be well served. As it stands now, you have some work to put together, what looks like, an interesting and rich childhood.

Good luck with this.

Dave

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Summary: I was born into a prominent Dutch family. My parents moved to the United States in the early 1950s, during a decline in our fortunes. The shipyards had been destroyed by the Nazis, rebuilt but then, like a recovering patient with underlying conditions, died a painful death in front of us. My mother's father's wealth, of mysterious origins, was lost before my generation came of age. My brothers and I grew up in the Ramapo Hills of Rockland County, New York—a strange place, hardly a stone's throw from New York City.

This is from a chapter "The Color Room" which starts when I'm 18 but includes recollections as I experience them on my walk one winter day.

On an early Monday morning, January 1973, age eighteen, I put a plate on the table and glanced towards the ovens, to see if anything was on fire. A ribbon of smoke, split from the white billows, slipped by the edge of the hood and rose to the ceiling. We had clobbered (*cobbled?*) the hood from scrap plywood one whiskey fueled night a few years earlier. ~~Teeth clenched~~ *With clenched teeth*, my father ~~had driven~~ *drove* the last fastener ~~in~~ *into* the wall and stood back to appraise the work. He said, "Voortreffelijk," a complimentary Dutch term, and then snapped back into English, . "Now, for the final touch." **Standing on the Tappan gas range, black Goodyear-soled motorcycle boot**

MEMOIR: THE COLOR ROOM BY JAMES GOEDKOOP

right on the grill, my brother John's last session ended—not long after it began.

(Awkward, confusing sentence.) He climbed down and swung the handle of the ball-pein hammer into my hand. “Here,” he said, then added, “This is about the dumbest thing”.

(Period goes inside the quote.) We had pounded the surface into dimples—too deep in some spots, less in others but as we neared the end of the project, the little craters were uniform, like on a golf ball. My father raised his eyes in sardonic appreciation. My mother laughed in delight. We sprayed the cratered surface with Krylon bright copper. *(A wooden hood over a stove? Sounds like a joke. And dimpled with a ballpeen hammer.)*

Powering the hood (*exhaust*), a heavy black fan, a relic from a surplus vendor on Canal Street and thick with grease, not from its re-purposed life in our kitchen but from some former service, chirped like a hoarse bird with every slow turn. *(Sentence is too long. Try to simplify.)* The two stoves sat side by side. *(When did the second stove appear?)* They weren't for decoration. My mother used both ovens and all eight burners—gas for some things, electric for others. She cooked artful meals: Indonesian rijstaffel—a complex mix of delicacies adapted by the Dutch in colonial times; Boerenkool met worst—curly kale, mashed potatoes and rookworst; boiled beef tongue, pressure cooked artichokes, razor thin crepes, delicate almond pastry and many more. *(She sounds very talented.)*

But I could lay out a pound of bacon in the electric oven and have it done in no time. I sat on the kitchen bench, a utility piece well suited to the surroundings. It was a simple thing made of two separated beams that served as seating, supported by angled

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rough hewn legs, like a sideways shave horse. It was comfortable despite the gap, moreover, unlike any other seat, it allowed the sheath of a sizable knife to hang unimpeded between the stretchers without twisting one's belt loop. *(New paragraph)* This bench was paired with a heavy farmer type table made of oak; its surface *(comprised)* of three glued-up wooden slabs suffered deep gouges and random hacked-in designs from those knives. My brothers and I had twenty or thirty ~~each~~ *knives*. I preferred the Puma White Hunter 6377, bone scales, *with* front and rear quillons.

Some years before, at Heymans' Army-Navy store in Suffern, a certain knife caught my attention. Behind the counter, Mr. Heyman, eyed me with suspicion. He and his twin ran the place. They were indistinguishable and equally ill tempered so, in any meaningful sense to a twelve-year old, it didn't matter which one it was. I lowered my glance and turned down the aisle, towards my brother John. Without need of words, he assessed the situation and came over to inspect the knife. The two of us shuffled around, backs to the counter, obscuring Mr. Hymen's view. John appeared suspicious of the quality. Gripping the handle, he viewed the blade with a concerned expression, flipped it and pointed to the stamp on the blade near the haft. In small letters, it said, "Made in Japan." He looked at me, shook his head, and then gestured to the knife he was holding. It said, "Made in Germany." Continuing his unbroken focus, he nodded. *(You spent some time developing the knife segment. What was the result? Did it make a long lasting impression? It needs some place in the story.)*

Familiar with Tolkien, I had a thin, double-edged dagger, like an Arkansas

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Toothpick, with transparent green plastic handles and imbedded designs like core swirls in a marble. I referred to it as the “Elfin Dagger.” Joost had a huge Bowie of gleaming stainless (*steel?*). This knife (confiscated some years later by a State Trooper in New Mexico) featured a bulbous handle of wrapped rawhide. In terms of respect, it stood alone among our knives, not only because of its seniority and fearsome presence, but because Joost had filed it out from a piece of raw bar stock—blade, blood gutter and all.

(More of a recollection with no context to the story.)

~~There~~ *On the ground around back near the porch, there* was an old wooden door made of solid planks, flat ~~on the ground around back, near the porch.~~ *It* *The planks* must have sealed one of the furniture crates from Holland. John and I used it for mumble-peg, a game played barefoot. We were then eight or ten and he explained the rules of the game: He said, “Stand over there.” We stood four feet apart. “Now, make a bet on how many times I can stick (*throw?*) the knife between your feet.” *(New paragraph)* “Three,” I said. He threw the knife. It stuck close to my left foot. *(New paragraph)* “Now,” (as he jerked it out), “move your foot there and I’ll try again. If I can do it two more times, I win. If I hit your foot, you win. If you chicken out, I win.” We had few mishaps. I remember one—and it involved inexperienced friends, not my brothers. *(Again, a memory with no home. Try to arrange the thoughts into a cohesive story rather than a jumble of unconnected memories.)*

A group of us were camping on the island. *(I assume you've already identified 'the*

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island.’) Things were uncontrolled: knives flying, whining in deflected, spinning trajectories when one sunk into my ankle. I thought, “goddammit, one of mine!” (*One of my what?*) I looked over the campfire. The bastard didn’t even have his own knives. The single piece red-handled throwing knife, now imbedded in my ankle, was one of three: green, red and blue, coming from my matched set. The plastic sheath was ganged with staggered slots for quick retrieval and the jackass had that (which was empty) on his belt. (*Strange to be more specific about the knife that the knife injury. What was the result?*)

One summer, Joost designated an immense tree in the pine-woods as the “knife-throwing tree.” It was a two-stemmed white pine, perhaps five foot in diameter and we sent hunting knives, pocket-knives, hatchets, axes and tomahawks sailing into that tree. Bark, splinters and ricocheting weapons flew off in all directions. Joost then hung an immense log in front of the knife-throwing tree. The moving target swung like a pendulum. (*Another instance of free-standing memories. Try to relate them to something that would add up to a total experience.*)

In the pre-dawn light, I bit into my bacon sandwich and gazed out the window. Everyone was asleep. With saws, axes and hand tools, my parents had cleared an expanse of woods the size of a football field behind the house. I could now make out the heavy trolley cable crossing the field from the tree-house, the lake a hundred yards out, and beyond that the silhouette of the distant Ramapo Hills. (*This could be an interesting experience, but, like the others, this is a snapshot of a moving experience. Give it some*

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life. It also sounds like it happened all of a sudden. You must have seen the view expand as the clearing expanded.)

Standing up, I stepped backwards over the bench, loosened my belt, and rearranged the ten-inch knife so that the blade, within its leather sheath, was now tucked in my right rear pocket and hidden from view. With belt cinched and shirttails out, I was ready to address the day—much the same as I would address any other day. It wasn't any form of concealment or subterfuge, but one of discretion. Three months later, I would fly to New Mexico with the Puma. *(Unnecessary paragraph. No relation to anything. If the trip to New Mexico is important enough to mention, it's important enough to elaborate here.)*

Economy *(seats)* ~~was~~ *were* full, ~~and~~ *so* I got bumped to first class. *(The trip to New Mexico?)* With the entire row to myself, I slipped my buckle pin, pulled the White Hunter loose and set it on the seat next to me. I looked up at the stewardess. She surveyed the passengers with one hand on her hip, the other on an empty headrest(.) ~~and in~~ *In* time, *she* looked in my direction, expressionless. One eye, a little misaligned, suggested that she appraised something else—maybe the passenger behind *(me?)*. ~~It~~ *It* was *impossible* to tell(.). ~~but~~ *But* then, she shifted her attention to the seat occupied by the knife and giggled. *(Just a jumble of unconnected hors-d'oeuvres. Tasty but unsatisfying.)*

Buddha (the dog) sat on her window-height table watching for squirrels. I gave

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her a kiss, and passing through the entry-way, snatched my coat from the pile of old clothing, boots and artifacts, and stepped into the cold air. *(Talk more about the dog. Your childhood friend? A pain in the butt? Old, near the end? give it more than this.)*

I preferred Camel, non-filters. That's what my father smoked. My mother had smoked Parliaments for a while but so not to create a bad example, quit when we were young. My father and I were in the living room. The fire was roaring. There were guests around(,) but for a moment, the two of us sat uninterrupted, staring at the reflections of the flames on the polished surface of the marble table, glasses of whiskey. There was an odd wooden cigarette server from Japan with a lever actuated wooden duck that grabbed a short, standard non-filter. It made a springing noise, twanging like a haiku or something. I said, "Pop, I wonder, maybe it isn't a good idea? *(to smoke?)*" I was seventeen then and thinking about quitting. My timing must have been bad(,) or maybe it was the social context(,) or maybe *it was* the bourbon. *(New paragraph)* He frowned and said, "Heh" (a Dutch expression, or perhaps one unique to him), "All men smoke."

Jenn

MEMOIR: THE COLOR ROOM BY JAMES GOEDKOOP

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He said, "Voortreffelijk," a complimentary Dutch term, and then snapped back into English, "Now, for the final touch." Standing on the Tappan gas range, black Goodyear-soled motorcycle boot right on the grill, my brother John's last session ended—not long after it began. He climbed down and swung the handle of the ball-peen hammer into my hand. "Here," he said, then added, "This is about the dumbest thing." We had pounded the surface into dimples—too deep in some spots, less in others but as we neared the end of the project, the little craters were uniform, like on a golf ball. My father raised his eyes in sardonic appreciation. My mother laughed in delight. We sprayed the cratered surface with Krylon bright copper.

Commented [PHS IS1]: Maternal grandfather's

Commented [PHS IS2]: Do you mean clobbered

Commented [PHS IS3]: I don't know what this means

Commented [PHS IS4]: I don't know what he means by this

MEMOIR: THE COLOR ROOM BY JAMES GOEDKOOP

Powering the hood, a heavy black fan— a relic from a surplus vendor on Canal Street and thick with grease, not from its re-purposed life in our kitchen but from some former service— chirped like a hoarse bird with every slow turn. The two stoves sat side by side. They weren't for decoration. My mother used both ovens and all eight burners— gas for some things, electric for others. She cooked artful meals: Indonesian rijstafel—a complex mix of delicacies adapted by the Dutch in colonial times; Boerenkool met worst—curly kale, mashed potatoes and rookworst; boiled beef tongue, pressure cooked artichokes, razor thin crepes, delicate almond pastry and many more.

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MEMOIR: THE COLOR ROOM BY JAMES GOEDKOOP

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Commented [PHS 1S6]: Hyphenate ill-tempered

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Commented [PHS 1S7]: Huh? He was just 12yo and in the Army & Navy store. Now he's 8?

MEMOIR: THE COLOR ROOM BY JAMES GOEDKOOP

He said, "Stand over there." We stood four feet apart. "Now, make a bet on how many times I can stick the knife between your feet."

"Three," I said.

He threw the knife. It stuck close to my left foot. "Now," ~~(as he jerked it out),~~ "move your foot there and I'll try again." ~~He jerked the knife out of the dirt.~~ "If I can do it two more times, I win. If I hit your foot, you win. If you chicken out, I win."

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A group of us were camping on the island. Things were uncontrolled: knives flying, whining in deflected, spinning trajectories when one sunk into my ankle. I thought, "~~G~~oddammit, one of mine!" I looked over the campfire. The bastard didn't even have his own knives. The single piece red-handled throwing knife, now imbedded in my ankle, was one of three: green, red and blue, coming from my matched set. The plastic sheath was ganged with staggered slots for quick retrieval and the jackass had ~~the empty sheath that (which was empty)~~ on his belt.

One summer, Joost designated an immense tree in the pine-woods as the "knife-throwing tree." It was a two-stemmed white pine, perhaps five foot in diameter, ~~and~~ ~~we~~ sent hunting knives, pocket-knives, hatchets, axes and tomahawks sailing into that tree. Bark, splinters and ricocheting weapons flew off in all directions. Joost then hung an immense log in front of the knife-throwing tree. The moving target swung like a pendulum.

Commented [PHS IS8]: Did you mean they had a few mishaps? Or they didn't have many mishaps?

Commented [PHS IS9]: Who?

Commented [PHS IS10]: So what happened?

Commented [PHS IS11]: You're starting new stories without finishing the prior one.

MEMOIR: THE COLOR ROOM BY JAMES GOEDKOOP

In the pre-dawn light, I bit into my bacon sandwich and gazed out the window. Everyone was asleep. With saws, axes and hand tools, my parents had cleared an expanse of woods the size of a football field behind the house. I could now make out the heavy trolley cable crossing the field from the tree-house, the lake a hundred yards out, and beyond that the silhouette of the distant Ramapo Hills.

Standing up, I stepped backwards over the bench, loosened my belt, and re-arranged the ten-inch knife so that the blade, within its leather sheath, was now tucked in my right rear pocket and hidden from view. With belt cinched and shirttails out, I was ready to address the day—much the same as I would address any other day. It wasn't any form of concealment or subterfuge, but one of discretion. Three months later, I would fly to New Mexico with the Puma.

Economy was full and I got bumped to first class. With the entire row to myself, I slipped my buckle pin, pulled the White Hunter loose and set it on the seat next to me. I looked up at the stewardess. She surveyed the passengers with one hand on her hip, the other on an empty headrest and in time, looked in my direction, expressionless. One eye, a little misaligned, suggested that she appraised something else—maybe the passenger behind, it was impossible to tell, but then, she shifted her attention to the seat occupied by the knife and giggled.

Commented [PHS IS12]: Where and when are we now?

MEMOIR: THE COLOR ROOM BY JAMES GOEDKOOP

Buddha (the dog) sat on her window-height table watching for squirrels. I gave her a kiss, and passing through the entry-way, snatched my coat from the pile of old clothing, boots and artifacts, and stepped into the cold air.

I preferred Camel, non-filters. That's what my father smoked. My mother had smoked Parliaments for a while but so not to create a bad example, quit when we were young. My father and I were in the living room. The fire was roaring. There were guests around but for a moment, the two of us sat uninterrupted, staring at the reflections of the flames on the polished surface of the marble table, glasses of whiskey. There was an odd wooden cigarette server from Japan with a lever actuated wooden duck that grabbed a short, standard non-filter. It made a springing noise, twanging like a haiku or something.

I said, "Pop, I wonder, maybe it isn't a good idea?" I was seventeen then and thinking about quitting. My timing must have been bad or maybe it was the social context or maybe the bourbon.

He frowned and said, "Hegh" (a Dutch expression, or perhaps one unique to him), "All men smoke."

Commented [PHS IS13]: I'm so confused. What happened on the plane?