



ONLY SO MANY HOURS

It's not easy to keep an island in the same family for seven generations

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Sam does his best to help. At home in Camden he tries to clean up after himself, tries to remember to say please and thank you. At five years old, he's trying to make things easier for his mother, Treena, who's raising him by herself. But on Eagle Island, in Penobscot Bay, where his mother grew up and his grandparents, Bob and Helene Quinn, still live, he has been helping for years.

If Sam were to help his grandfather drive the length of Eagle Island in the John Deere tractor, from its southwest head to the northern tip where Eagle Light still stands, the trip would take 15 minutes. Just south of the lighthouse, at the bottom of the hill—where Sam likes to play with his trucks in the garden's dirt pile—he would see Quinn House, the original homestead of Samuel Sr., the founding head of the Quinn family and Sam's namesake.



"I think next year, I'm going to start getting younger," says Bob Quinn.

Movements around Quinn House are slow in the early hours. Bob sits next to the kitchen stove and listens to the maritime weather forecast over the VHF radio. Helene makes several trips outside to the hand-dug well, carrying drinking water inside for tea, one metal pail at a time, while Jaaron Shaw, Bob's sternman, sits on a corner stool, waiting to leave for the morning lobster trap haul. As the sun inches skyward, eventually showing itself above Deer Isle due east, dark reds and oranges bleed through the wall of pine and birch trees that fence Eagle Island off from the sea.

"Seems to me that we can take in the float at Bear after fishing, as long as we can catch the tide," Bob says, thumbing through his daily journal, seeing what needs to be done for the week. Jaaron nods, his eyes closed.

"I'll pack you guys an extra snack," Helene says, moving Sam's miniature John Deere tractor and hay baler—left behind from his last visit—off the table to make room for a Tupperware bin full of Helene's homemade doughnuts.

Bob's journal, or the "Bible" as it's often called, is where every chore and reminder and the day's weather is noted carefully in pencil. In the fall, the list of tasks is particularly daunting, as winterizing the island must happen before the weather turns unpredictable and violent.

Every October and November, Bob closes up the dozen summer cottages on Eagle, boarding windows and draining pipes. Since he's also the paid caretaker of five other small islands situated between North Haven and Deer Isle—Bear, Beach, Oak and Scragg—he's responsible for doing the same for the homes there, as well as hauling in the docking-floats from their tiny harbors. After the first snowfall, he'll burn the mountain of brush that has been collected from summer projects. Meanwhile, he and Helene have to start insulating Quinn House and stacking firewood in the cellar for their winter alone.

Major projects that are slated for this coming spring are also recorded in the journal: repairing the roof on the boathouse, painting the dormers on Quinn House and fixing the barn before it collapses. In 1815, Samuel Sr. nailed on the clapboards that still hang on the

barn—weathered but functional. In the next couple of years, when Bob finishes work on the barn, he figures his clapboards should stay on there for another century or two.

At this point, Bob wants to hang on to the island for another five years, making it to the 200-year mark the Quinn family has owned and lived on Eagle Island. But with growing older—Bob is 67, Helene is 61—and a lack of help throughout the winter, it's become increasingly difficult to meet the daily quota of chores. And now, with Bob's latest head cold, some things just have to be put off.

"It's one of those double-edged swords," Bob says, buttoning up his jacket and pulling on his cap, the corduroy covered in engine grease and sea salt. "There are only so many hours in the day. Either there's more to do, or I can do less."

It's the first morning in almost a week without heavy fog rolling through the bay; there's not another fishing boat in sight. The Quinn trap-buoys, black and orange, are everywhere, in perfectly straight lines. After Thanksgiving, Bob is going to add another job to his journal: pulling his traps for the season.

Bob and Jaaron take up a trap, flinging crabs and non-legal lobsters back into the water, then taking out seven keepers, the biggest single haul yet today. The whole process—pulling and cleaning the trap, refilling it with fresh bait, and closing it up—takes the two men roughly 20 seconds.

"Looks like we have the only restaurant in town," Bob says, handing a keeper to Jaaron who bands its claws and tosses it into a barrel full of salt water. Bob rights his boat, the TM II, and throws the trap back where the sea floor is deep.

"I don't really feel it yet, physically, this aging," Bob says, sniffing and dabbing his runny nose with the back of his hand. "But sometimes, pulling my rowboat up at low tide by myself, that's hard. I've been thinking about it," he says, "and I think next year, I'm gonna start getting younger."



"I had a couple of years' real struggling to know what my place was going to be," says Helene, who left a job as a school secretary in 1991 to move permanently to Eagle Island.

Steam from the hot water bucket—used to clean the trap rope—encases Bob like a ghostly jacket. He uses the gaff to hook another buoy, and then feeds the rope into the hydraulic motor. The last trap in their string of five appears on the surface of the water and Jaaron helps Bob pull it up to the side of the boat.

Hauling is a quiet process for them. Bob leaves Jaaron to his duties—packing herring and pogies in net bait bags, tying them inside the traps when they come up. After spending four years as Bob's sternman and another three as a summer farmhand, Jaaron says he always knows where Bob's hands are going to go and how he'll distribute his weight.

"Time to change occupations," Bob says, glancing at his watch and throwing the trap back. He points the TM II west, toward Bear Island, and then slips out of his orange waders. Eating handfuls of raisins and peanuts from a Ziploc bag, he consults his fishing log, a waterproof notebook where he records lobsters kept and traps hauled.

"We only hauled half of 'em," he says, frowning.

Wiping her hands on her apron, covered in layers of flour and coconut oil, Helene reads the morning mail that just came off the KATHERINE, the island's mailboat. The first thing she opens is a package from an elderly lady in Castine, a longtime guest on Eagle, who enclosed a recipe for corned beef Jell-O mold and a bag of catnip for Basil and Toggle, Sam's island kittens. Sam says that he picked out a black cat and an orange cat because those are the colors of his Grampy's trap buoys.

The next letter, from a couple who married on Eagle in the beginning of September, thanks the Quinns for a "magical time." When there's a wedding on the island, it's a weeklong production. Bob coordinates the boats to bring guests over from the mainland, while Helene and Trenea decorate the dining room and begin cooking days ahead of time.

The last piece of mail is a postcard from Greg Hoke, the Quinns' first "summer son," who is in Barcelona, Spain, attending a geology conference as part of his PhD.

"We started having kids come out to work during the summer," Helene says, folding an envelope of junk mail in half and then quarters. "And I didn't even decide that. They started asking me to come."

It doesn't take all that long for the Quinns' hired teenage help to become adopted family. Helene says it's difficult to say which way the adoption goes—it's often the kids who end up adopting the Quinns. Given a room in Quinn House, three daily meals and a summer wage, they gladly take on any number of jobs that Bob and Helene can't, or don't, want to deal with anymore—doing loads of laundry, splitting wood or washing dishes. And sometimes, as in Jaaron's case, a single summer of work can turn into nearly a decade.

Nothing hums on Eagle in the afternoon. There's no machinery running, nothing that makes a noise except dishes that clink, chair legs that scrape the floor, or birds that fly low over the island. Taking small steps between the countertop, the cupboards and the stove, Helene files the day's mail with the bills they need to send, then stirs homemade applesauce for lunch. Her cooking is a way to keep her family alive and working, but is also a means of income—one that has evolved since their first years on the island.

At the time of the Quinns' permanent move from their home in Stonington to Eagle Island in 1991, Helene had just left her longtime job as a secretary at Deer Isle-Stonington High School, a place where she was in the thick of constant activity.

"Making the transition [from] being so involved in the community, I had a couple of years of real struggling to know what my place was going to be," Helene says, setting out water glasses and filling them to the brim. "I felt like I didn't really know, other than being support to Bob, what I was going to be, or do, or anything."



"My grandfather was a lighthouse keeper," Bob remarks. "They lived in pretty confined quarters, didn't move around much, stayed right in one place. So I really don't feel much need to go anywhere."

The Eagle Island Bakery, run out of Helene's kitchen, came from that need to be involved. She turned it into her own business, making molasses doughnuts, lemon-poppy-seed muffins and her famous anadama bread. The bakery became so popular, she eventually started putting baked goods on the mailboat and sending them off to the other Penobscot Bay islands. At its peak, Helene was getting up at two or three in the morning so the bread could be done for the eight o'clock boat. Then, like a lot of things, it just got to be too much—she had to back off so she didn't burn herself out.

But the introduction of the bakery sparked a change in the way the island operated from then on. During the summers, Bob and Helene began renting out cottages and running Quinn House as an inn. The hospitality business, long since vanished after the years of the Depression and the death of Bob's grandmother, was revived due to Bob's dedication to work on the island and Helene's push to surround herself with people. Now, after decades of the island remaining desolate, there is an active summer community as there was when the early Quinns boarded guests at Quinn House.

Helene realizes now that she created exactly what satisfied her at the high school: kids, community, and a central position in the social bustle. With people visiting from all different walks of life, she says, living on Eagle affords her a cosmopolitan lifestyle without ever having to leave.

If Sam walked south from the farmhouse, past the mounds of raked hay and the solar panels that power his grandparents' home, he'd hit the main road, the muddy path that runs the length of the island. Then midway down the road, past the small cottage where he lives with his mother during the summer, Sam would get to the cemetery where nearly every member of the early Quinn family is buried.

Across the road from the cemetery is the Howard Barn, which is on Sam's grandmother's family's old property. Along with the Quinns, the Howards were the other primary landowners in the early years on Eagle. When Sam's grandparents got married in 1966 the Quinn and Howard properties came together.

The running joke between Sam's Grammy and Grampy is that they were born married, becoming "mixed up" with each other while

spending summers on Eagle when they were teenagers. Helene remembers wanting to spend more time with Bob, but it was difficult to keep him in one place. He walked so fast that Helene would have to stick her hand in the back pocket of his jeans just to catch up.

The mower, dating back to when the four family farms on Eagle were still operable, sits next to the Howard Barn, rust coming off in great flakes. Sam climbs on its seat and pulls down the lever that raises the blades. He likes playing a game called "Get to work!" where he is the foreman to a crew of farmhands.

"That's enough work for now, boys," Sam yells out to the grassy plot in front of the barn, the bright red lobes of his ears sticking out from his orange hunter's hat. "Go have yourselves a lunch break. Take a rest."

A certain amount of work has to be done every day, so he has to be tough on his men, but he considers himself a good boss. Taking watch over the land while his men sleep, he leans a musket-shaped stick on his shoulder, protecting everyone from the grizzly bears that live in the swath of spruce and juniper behind the cemetery.

His boot heels clicking against the floorboards, Bob lumbers across the summer dining room of Quinn House—a converted boat shop—and settles himself in at the head of the table, smelling of hay and mildew and sweat. His lunch plate is covered with dinner leftovers: broiled cod and shrimp, potatoes and a pile of hot applesauce. He takes a few moments to admire the spread, then lowers his head to eat. Working quickly, and like most of his tasks, silently, his brow furrows in concentration. Within minutes, the food is gone; he mops up the remains with a slice of bread while Helene eats slowly, taking time to taste what she has cooked.

Taking small sips from his mug, Bob lets the tea bag steep before fishing it out, squeezing it damp, and using it to clean breadcrumbs off the table. Leaning back, he examines his hands, takes a buck knife from his belt and shaves off crescents of fingernails. He uses its point to dig out dirt from his cuticles.

"It might not be my cooking that everyone loves," Helene says, taking Bob's empty plate and stacking it beneath hers, making a

mountain of forks and knives on top of them. "It might be that we live on an island and with the island air, everyone's appetite is huge. They could be eating anything and it'd probably taste good. I *would* like to be a better pie maker, though."

Bob sticks a toothpick in his mouth and runs it along his partial plate and gums. "For the record," he says, stroking the side of his beard, rolling the white and gray between his fingers, "I'd like to say that I find no faults with your pie."

Helene pats him on the knee; his face becomes taut with a smile and all the wrinkles and deep creases converge, as if pulled upwards by string.

Sam's first word was *articulated*. As in articulated trucks, used for heavy construction. His aspiration now is the same as it was three years ago: He wants to be a flatbed truck driver, delivering loads all over the country.

"But I have a lot of jobs now," Sam says, fingering a hole in his new pants. "I have to fix boat engines and pave roads out West and plow snow and salt the roads and a guy in Camden just called me and asked me to start working at the dump. And I'm gonna be a vet soon, too."

Sam is still too young to operate machinery and tools or the TM II. It will be a while before his grandparents let him run things by himself, but he's already learning. He gets up with his Grampy and Jaaron at five o'clock when they leave for fishing, he knows some of the knots to tie up the boats when they dock, and he sees his Grammy and Grampy getting tired from the long summer days. He knows that people living on Eagle Island have always worked—and that there is always more work to be done.

When he was just beginning to talk, Sam shared his penchant for work with Bob.

"You know," he said, walking up the hill to the house with his grandfather, "it was a long time ago that I built this house."

Bob looked at his two-year-old grandson closely and nodded as Sam's eyes passed over the white farmhouse, taking in how the wood fit snug together, how the white paint was peeling.

"We were building the foundation and we took the fieldstones and sort of stacked them this way," Sam said, making an angled design with his hands, lacing his fingers together.

"I know," Bob said. "I know you did."

Driving to Burnt Cove Market in Stonington, Bob grips the steering wheel of his pickup tightly, keeping his eyes fixed between the road and the speedometer. Helene has given him a shopping list, 15 items long, keeps it in the breast pocket of his flannel shirt. His journal sits next to him on the bench seat. Bob doesn't like to leave Eagle much, gets anxious if he's gone for more than a day or two.

"I think maybe there's something in my genes that makes me not want to move a lot," he says, checking his mirrors every 15 seconds. "My grandfather was a lighthouse keeper. They lived in pretty confined quarters, didn't move around much, stayed right in one place. So I really don't feel much need to go anywhere."

During the summer, the Quinns usually send their kids ashore to do the grocery shopping. But now, as late autumn cools the air and the sun sits lower in the sky, Bob and Helene pick up food for themselves, cans of vegetables and bags of potatoes to accompany the fish or meatloaf Helene cooks for them.

"If anything ever happened to her," Bob says, taking one hand off the wheel and coughing into it, his teeth whistling, "it'd be the end of me, too, 'cause I'll starve to death after two or three days."

A truck with out-of-state plates barrels past the pickup on the left and cuts in front. Bob narrows his eyes, looking ahead. "See?" he says quietly, pointing through the windshield. "Things like that, I don't like so much."

"At some point," Helene says, walking out to the chicken coop with a mixing bowl full of apple peels and crab shells, "we have to slow down because we can't continue to be overextended like this."

She dumps the bowl over the fence and the chickens rush to the pile, squawking and pecking. Arching her back, Helene rubs at the nape of her neck, just beneath her wool hat. Her doctor in Ellsworth says that the pain may be stress-related.

Helene would like nothing better than to close up the island each winter and spend the time traveling, visit her sisters who are scattered across the country. She'd like to reduce the mail contract with the post office in Sunset to just a summer contract, so that they're not obligated to stay on Eagle for the winter.

"It doesn't benefit anybody for us to get so far overdone that we can't do what we need to or take care of ourselves," she says, looking out over the water, to the cellular towers—blinking red lights—circling the bay. "And no one can do it for us. We have to be the ones to set boundaries and change and take time back for ourselves. We both know that it's gotten to that point."

It's the middle of October and there are still a few cottages that need to be closed up tight before the end of the month. Bob hasn't yet started to move the firewood into the cellar and there's still mowing to be done. But the job on the books for this afternoon is to haul the ISHMAEL out of the water for the season. Several more sailboats will have to be hauled over the next few weeks as more islanders ask Bob for his help, but the ISHMAEL needs to come out today.

Rusted chains and rope stretch across the shore, hooked from the back of the John Deere to the front of a wooden boat cradle, which is weighed down by tubs of wet sand. The tide continues to rise and swallow the cradle while Bob waits for Jaaron to finish unloading three barrels of bait from the ROYAL, here to make its weekly delivery and pick up Bob's hauled lobsters.

Jaaron has taken the rowboat out to the trap float for the exchange—a stone's throw from the wharf—but Bob needs the rowboat to position the ISHMAEL in its cradle and needs Jaaron to run the tractor. It's now high tide, and the right time to pull out the boat will be lost in a matter of minutes.

Bob hooks his thumbs through the belt loops of his Wranglers and paces the wharf, the timbers groaning. Squinting, he watches the sun start to sink behind the Camden Hills to the west.

"All right, Jaaron," he calls out, cupping his hands around his mouth, "we need to get moving."

Jaaron rows back and Bob marches into the water, the waves lapping against his boots and jeans. He steps into the boat, his knees creaking, as Jaaron tries to start the tractor. He turns the key several times but the engine sputters to a stop. Coming back on land and crawling under the tractor's hood, Bob touches the connections with leathery fingers, tries to start it again and walks away, throwing his hands in the air when it stops coughing altogether.

Disappearing into the boathouse, Bob comes out with a new battery and replaces the dead one, his hands moving deftly. Daylight is being lost by the second, the sky turning to a cold, dark blue. The tractor purrs noisily once again. Climbing into the ISHMAEL, Bob uses the outboard motor to back it up and secure it on the cradle once again.

Jaaron gets back onto the tractor and turns the headlights on, casting a glow across the line of trees that tower over the shore road on both sides. The tractor jolts forward and the cradled boat comes sliding up on the log rollers, half a foot at a time. The ISHMAEL finally settles in the middle of the beach and Jaaron cuts the engine.

"Okay," Bob says, mopping his face with the sleeve of his shirt, "she won't float there."

On the west side of Eagle Island, Sam walks the Orchard Beach, the heels of his sneakers blinking red and yellow lights. Making an X in the sand with a stick, he starts shoveling with a trowel, digging a foot down in the sand before tiring and becoming frustrated.

"The treasure has to be around here somewhere!" he says, sticking a toe into the hole and kicking it, small grunts escaping from inside him. Consulting a scrap of paper with scribbles on it, he does calcula-

tions on his hands, goose bumps traveling up and down his arms. Along his forehead, his blond hair turns dark with sweat.

"This is a treasure map and *this*," he shouts, making an arc with his hand, presenting the forest and the shore and the bay, "is Treasure Island!"

Plodding away from his hole, Sam spots a green piece of sea glass, resting among the rocks, and picks it up. He brushes off its coat of sand, and closing one eye, holds it up to the waning sun to look through it.

"Ha!" he says, smiling, dropping it into his pocket with the rest of his glass collection. When Sam smiles, secret lines form in the corners of his mouth, like ripples in water.

Heading out to the barn after morning toast and tea, Helene gathers jagged laths and rolls of plastic sheeting, and piles them into a wheelbarrow. Today is going to be spent banking, sealing the foundation to make the house warmer. This is something that has been done hundreds of times before, every winter. There are thousands of rusted staples and nail holes in the clapboards of Quinn House.

The pain in her hands from kneading dough keeps Helene from using the staple gun, so she lets Treena tack the plastic to the worn clapboards. As her daughter moves along the length of the house, Helene collects chunks of brick to weigh down the sections of long plastic that bulge and deflate with a stiff breeze. Up until a few years ago, the Quinns always cut boughs off spruce trees, wove them together and piled them alongside the house, so when the snow came, it sifted in and sealed up, making it airtight around the foundation. Now, they use hay from the field and the garden.

"The thing to keep in mind is that you *cannot* make a plan," Helene says, pulling her turtleneck up to her chin. "If you can't be flexible, you can't be here because everything depends on the winds and the tides and other weather considerations and how do you know what it's gonna be? You don't."

Averting her eyes from the sun's glare, she pitches damp hay from the garden into the wheelbarrow. Hens cluck wildly as the pitchfork gets too close to their coop. Rolling the wheelbarrow back to the house, she spots some cracks in the foundation and pushes an extra fork full of hay against the stone. Dirt and grass stains cover the knees of her jeans.

Sam and his cousin, Nick, come out of the house bundled in down jackets, looking for work. "We want to hammer things," Sam says, running his hand along the planks of the porch, splintering and badly in need of fresh paint.

Helene gives them hammers with electrical tape wrapped around the handles and a coffee can full of nails. Their hammers move with purpose, pounding nails frantically into the laths, three in each.

"Smash!" Sam yells, his eyes beady and stern. "Get in there, you nail!"

By ten o'clock, the cold is gone and Helene takes off her gloves. Her cheeks glow pink and she sighs out small puffs of air. Her gold hoop earrings and wedding band glint as the sun slowly rises above the house.

Waking to the wind wailing and pushing against the eastern side of Quinn House, Bob and Helene head quickly into the kitchen. The clock says four, but the moon still hangs stubborn and high on the other side of the bay. Bob doesn't stop to listen for small-craft advisories over the radio: he knows the wind has shifted and that the TM II—moored on the eastern side of the island—has to be moved to the western side before the gales take her away. "I'll call you on the radio when I get aboard," he tells Helene, pulling on his gloves. He always calls to let her know he made it okay.

Helene watches from the living room window as Bob starts up the tractor and drives it south, down the main road toward the wood land-

ing beach. Starting her day, she waits for Bob's call. She feeds the kittens, lugs wood inside for the fire and has a cup of tea. A half an hour goes by. No call.

"Maybe he can't get aboard," Helene says, opening the circular range of the stove to add another chunk of wood. "He'll probably be coming back any minute."

Another twenty minutes pass. The wind picks up and gusts shake the few shingles on the barn that hang from half-sprung nails. Helene decides to call Bob on the radio.

"No answer," she says, tossing both hands up in front of her. She walks from one end of the house to the other, watching the way the trees move. Helene's pace quickens as she makes her way out to the entryway between the summer and winter parts—where the cold seeps through the cracks in the clapboards. Hands shaking, she sits on the bench and starts lacing up her boots.

Just then, the door bursts open. For a moment, Bob stands in its frame before closing it firmly. His eyes are lidded and tearing from the wind.

"Radio's out," he says, hanging his coat up on the hook.

Helene's shoulders sag as she slumps against the wall. "All right," she says, shaking off her boots, "how about some tea?"

Gradually, the throngs of summer islanders and guests dwindle, and now, at the end of November, they've disappeared completely—moved back to their year-round homes in southern Maine or Philadelphia or Sweden. Bob and Helene have moved too, down south, to their "condo in Florida." They've spent the past month slowly packing up their lives to move into the winter part of Quinn House, where there are two woodstoves and the heat is contained in the kitchen and dining room.

The winter move changes the island, changes Bob and Helene. They get a chance to decompress after the hectic summer and working to winterize—they read and talk, even watch movies. During the summer months, television is the furthest thing from their minds. But when the snow starts falling and the sky grows dark earlier every day, they wind up falling asleep in their chairs in front of the TV, or challenging each other in a heated game of cribbage.

Visitors in the dead of winter are rare—Sam and Treena are their only constant company. But this year will be different—Sam just started kindergarten. Now, he'll come out to Eagle only during the summers and on long weekends. But if he's anything like his grandfather, when he becomes a teenager, he'll have his boat packed up for Eagle Island the day he graduates from high school.

As Bob and Helene get older it's going to take someone like Sam to help them keep the island alive. Someone with eagerness and patience; someone with a deep commitment to preserving the land and the traditions of the Quinn family.

"Sam's the seventh generation," Bob says sleepily in his recliner, his fist propping up his head, "but I can't plan for Sam. He may move to New Orleans and be a ballerina dancer."

Bob says he has to start taking better care of himself. He doesn't understand why he can't remember to eat between meals, put a granola bar in his coat pocket. Especially after his cold, he says he really needs to try to keep his strength up so he's able to last from lunch until dinner.

At supper, Sam sits next to Bob, his legs dangling a foot from the floor. Moving pieces of food around with his fork, the tines ringing against the plate, Sam whines because the pork loin is crispy on the outside, covered in rosemary and pepper—he doesn't want anything besides the pale meat.

"It's all burnt," he says, his face tightening. "And there's fat."

"Here, honey," Helene says, leaning over with a knife to trim the skin off. When she's done, there's hardly any pork at all and Sam's sobbing starts again. He excuses himself and, except for Sam's soft whimpers from the other room, the dining room is quiet.



Reading aloud to his grandson is part of Bob's routine.

During tea and gingerbread, Sam returns to the table, holding a *Northern Tool & Equipment* catalog open to the pages filled with die-cast metal dump trucks and backhoes, equipment for playing with in the sand and mud.

"I'm gonna do better, Gramp," he says, wiping beads of tears from his eyes.

"Well, I'm gonna try to do better, too," Bob says, hoisting Sam up onto his lap and taking the catalog from his hands. "You know, there was a time, four years and forty pounds ago, when this was easier."

Sam looks up at him, his mouth slack, large dark gaps between his teeth. He stares as if it's the first time he's ever seen his grandfather.

"I guess the idea," Bob says, blowing his nose into his handkerchief, "is that I'm gonna read this to you and we're both gonna do better."

Helene stands by the stove and wipes at her nose with a tissue she keeps in her apron pocket. She's caught Bob's cold and is starting to feel it in her throat and behind her eyes. Bob comes in from fixing the Chrysler that's been gathering dust in the barn for decades; cold air rushes through the open door. He looks at Helene expectantly, as if waiting for some news, but she only looks back and smiles.

He paces the kitchen floor, unsure of what to do now that the winds have prevented him from fishing this morning. The easterlies around this time are especially fierce; they make every sailboat mast whistle and the thin spruce shake.

He checks the clock above the VHF radio, checks his watch, and checks the clock again. It's just after nine.

"Well," Bob says, breathing heavily through his nose, "this is about the time Jaaron and I have our picnic on the boat."

"We have muffins," Helene says. "Pear muffins. Do you want a muffin? Or a piece of apple cake?"

He pushes his cap up off his brow and scratches at his hairline, sweaty and gray. "I'm not much of a muffin person," he says. "I'm thinking about more of a peanut butter sandwich."

She laughs. This is what she packs him for his morning snack every day. "Okay then. Do you want me to make it for you?"

"Nope. I can get it."

Slicing thick pieces of Helene's bread, Bob spreads an inch of peanut butter on one side, but as he makes his way into the pantry for the jelly, Helene gets in his way, moving toward the sink with a kettle full of boiling water. As if flustered by each other, they step away in separate directions. Then they move again, close to one another this time, the tips of their boots touching.

Backed up against the sink, Bob lets Helene pass and she pours the kettle into a soapy basin full of dirty dishes. Returning to the stove, she throws her tissue into the fire and watches Bob shovel piles of strawberry jelly on his sandwich in huge spoonfuls. He sits and chews, hunched over his plate.

As Bob slides his chair back, Helene sidesteps out of his way, to begin their dance all over again. But instead, Bob stands solidly in front of her, inches away from her face, and puts both hands on her cheeks.

"I get a cold and then you get one," he says softly. "It's not fair."

"That's 'cause I worry about you so much," she says, grabbing a fresh Kleenex and holding it to her nose. "You get colds so quickly."

Bob walks to the door, smiles at Helene, then steps out into the cold.

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The Eagle Island Camera Project

During the summer of 2005, summer resident Bill Ginn distributed 50 box cameras to Eagle Islanders during the first week of August, asking them to make a photo record of their time on the island. "Together," Ginn says, "these images capture a collective 'view' of Eagle . . . these are a select few (280!) that I think capture the essence of Eagle as it is today." To view the results of the Eagle Island Camera Project, visit www.islandinstitute.org