Lines and Lines of Black...

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He was saving the poets...

He was saving the poets. Above him on a rock he could see gun muzzles dripping blood, smoke. One tried to run from under the ledge and fell, shot, water and tiny fleas spouting from his eye. He shouted, he held out his hand which seemed like a book. The man under the ledge was saving him, pulling him back under the rock, dragging the poet, it was easy. There, there, he was saying to the poet, to calm him, stuffing wads of pure cotton into his empty eye. You will lie on this special pallet I have prepared for you, he was saying, it will help your back problem. There was now more noise, as if artillery fire had commenced. When the man looked up he saw that scaling ropes were lowered down the rock face. To weight them, sausage and cheese, huge, the kind he remembered hanging in the delicatessen where mama met her lover the magician. A long, paraffin-coated cheese bumped in and out as it pulled down the scaling ropes which, now that they were closer, looked more like wires, the thick wound lower note wires on a piano. The poet was holding the wet cotton to his eye with the palm of his hand. He was angry, he was telling the man he had no instinct for form, he was telling the man that content was the real enemy, he was telling the man that in his next book he would make that enemy bleed. There, there, the man said, happy New Year to you my friend. Very soon now there will be blood sausage to eat and goat’s-milk cheese too. He asked the poet if he had ever played the piano.

George Chambers

Lines and lines of black...

Lines and lines of black, page, after page, years, more years, the record in black ink of joy and hope, despair and humiliation, terror, love, belief, the characters tramp along the black lines page after page, there is recognition confusion, clarity, black mystery line after thin line year after year, and the man is there in his position, his body and the chair he sits in form an h, his eyes track the lines left to right, left to right, his right hand turning the pages as the lines are recorded by his eyes, on and on he is tracking the black figures that wail to him year by year as he sits in the shape of an h, as he goes grey and slack, his eyes aided now by glasses and he hunts along the lines, as the shapes stumble along page after page, the man now has a magnifying glass which he moves across the lines an inch or so above the page, slowly, slowing, his hand shaking as he moves the glass left to right he is saying the words now, large black characters float in his glass line after line, they get larger and larger and the glass and his eyes begin to cloud and he can no longer read the lines himself, and he hires a young girl to come each day and he sits in the chair in the shape of an h and the girl begins over again once upon a time.

George Chambers