

*An anthology of writings - both fact and fiction - of an old man's full, happy, and successful life.*

## **An Old Man's Anthology**

By Robert G. Wilson

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Robert G. Wilson

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### **Three: Night of the Loons**

This time, the Macys and their daughter came to the Lodge late in August. Alex was happy to see Alice for the second time that season.

On one of the first warm evenings, Alice suggested they take out a rowboat after supper. She said, “My parents are going to play bridge tonight with some other guests. We’ll tell them where we’re going, and I’ll promise I won’t be too late.”

So, after supper they happily walked to the lake and selected a good dry boat. They started rowing down toward the west end of the lake. It was nearly dusk. The lake was glassy and barely shimmering. Conical spires of pine trees reflected in the water.

As Alex rowed, Alice hummed a tune in time with the oars. They both watched as daylight faded to silky black and stars glowed overhead. It was a beautiful evening. Alex felt exceptionally full of himself.

While he slowly rowed, he said, “Did you know that I have my own personal stars? Well, they aren’t mine, but I call them mine.”

“Wow, that’s pretty classy. Where are they?”

“Well, look up there to the North. See the stars that make the ‘W’ high in the sky. That’s like having my name in lights, isn’t it? Actually, that’s called Cassiopeia’s Chair. But she’s no longer using it, so I claimed it as mine – ‘W’ for Wilson.”

“That’s pretty special,” Alice said, “but I could turn it over and make it look like an ‘M’ for Macy, couldn’t I?”

“Okay, I’ll share it with you. But don’t make me stand on my head to see it!”

They both giggled and laughed. Then Alice returned to her song, this time quietly singing the words:

“When the deep purple falls over sleepy garden walls,  
and the stars begin to flicker in the sky . . .”

Then, joining her, Alex went on:

“In the midst of a memory, you wander back to me . . .”

That made them both burst out laughing. When the laughter transformed into giggles, her singing got softer, so he joined her again: “Breathing my name with a sigh . . .”

“I didn’t know you could sing,” Alice said.

“You can tell I can’t, but you inspire me, and I do listen to the Jukebox a lot. I think that was a recent Helen Forrest ballad.”



"I liked that one, too. I think it was Artie Shaw too, wasn't it?"

It was then that they heard the lonely, mournful wail of a loon. It seemed to come from the east end of the lake. Behind them came this high, sad, baleful cry that resonated all over the hills. It cried of longing and loneliness. It seemed to say, "I'm here, where are you?"

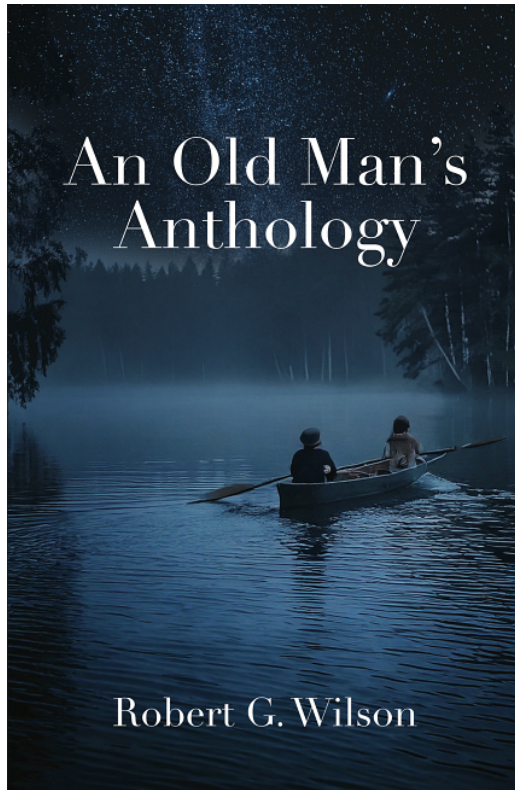
Soon, a response came from the other member of the pair at the extreme west end of the water saying, "I'm over here," in the same eerie, haunting voice.

From the rear seat of the boat, Alice quietly said, "That's the uncanny sound I've often heard at a distance from the lodge. Tonight, here, it's different. It sounds lovely and lonesome – without a friend in the world."

They could still see the dark silhouettes of the pines on shore reflected in the water as the new moon crept over the hills. Then, along the ribbon of moonlight on the lake, they saw her – the single loon, giving her magical wail again. Once more her mate responded – "I'm over here."

For Alex, the echoes of those woeful sounds raised deeper feelings.

They returned the boat to the dock where they shared a serious kiss. Then Alex held her hand as they walked back in darkness, to the bright lights of the lodge.



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