

Shaving Naked

James King

I've started doing obituary math. The narrowing gap does not concern me, for I plan to start walking vigorously and have already cut back, with the occasional relapse, on my sugar consumption. I've been told to watch my drinking, so every night

I watch my glass raised to the centenarians.

I am not worried. I have been down and up and over and through the ether to the black black nothingness, only to emerge squinting and stuttering. I am still here.

I shave naked now.

I celebrate the increasingly prominent collar bone, the stringier biceps, the growing gray atop the bonier chest. I take pride in the scars and, looking lower, rue the abduction of Europa and the launch of a thousand ships.

I cock my head and consider:

It is not a pretty sight, a man my age shaving naked. It is a liberation. A liberation to shrug at the denuded dome, to marvel at the trenches of my face, and to say aloud to the shadow of a younger self, dangling blithely in the cool cool air:

“You're coming with me.”

