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The Hunchback

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JAMES GALVIN

The Hunchback

Today I am captive to a caustic loneliness,
A certain fear that the Future Stone Age

Approaches ineluctably like a fog
Bank moving inland, obliterating any

Particulars of trees, buildings, beliefs,
Not just effacing the world's most vulnerable

Details, but devouring them. I know
That out there in the fog, April's oak, ash,

And maple leaves are blindly striving, people's
Houses crumble while cradling intricacies

Of familial peculiarities.
Even the people who live them will have no

Idea of what they mean in their denials
And self-deceptions as they eat a piece of toast,

Dance barefoot in the grass, water the flowers,
Or turn the page of a novel in which a hunchback

Is spotted hiding in a corner of
An empty swimming pool. Soon it will all

Have turned into a nostalgic fairy tale,
A lie of culture and nature and the Future

Stone Age will arrive to whisper in each of our ears
Everything we always knew was true.