

SALT MEADOW



MIRANDA BEESON

designed by [Nadira Vlaun](#)

SALT MEADOW

For Douglas Moore,
Emily Moore, Sarah Moore,
Brad & Mary Kelleher

Mary's fuchsia bathing suit. It is hanging on the towel rack at the end of the porcelain tub in the front bathroom upstairs. The suit has just been for a mid afternoon swim in the warm waters of Peconic Bay. With Mary, and probably Sarah too. There had been a pause for tanning on the beach, with a book. One that had been read before, but much loved, is being read again. Now everyone is in their rooms preparing for cocktails. A dress, some powder, lipstick and sandals. Simple sandals, maybe gold, like sandals in a Shirley Hazzard novel where characters don't fuss over jobs and wear sleeveless sheaths on the terrace of the Hotel Vesuvio. In the bathroom, across from the bathing suit, is a large jar of Noxzema and a bottle of Calamine lotion. The requirements of summer. Toothbrushes are lined up in an angle on the windowsill above the tub. There's a warm breeze and a small hole in the old screen. There's a fly in the room. Efforts will be made to release it unharmed back into the summer evening.

[SIMPLE SANDALS]

Mary comes downstairs in a bright skirt and a cotton blouse from Turkey. She is wearing gold earrings, Roman Filigree. A gift from Brad. Her hair is up, it has been since the 1950s. Other sandals come down the dark stairs. Everyone meets in the kitchen. "I like your blouse," "that dress," "those earrings." Crudités are cut. Mary pours gin over ice in the Pyrex cup, the small one that sits on the kitchen counter by the screen door, waiting for six o'clock. Carrots are arranged on the bright oval plate from Greece.

[SMALL CRACKERS]

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There is pâté, small crackers, a special cheese brought along by a guest. Sarah prefers vodka, Brad a glass of local white wine, guests may have whatever they please. Cocktails convene: an exercise in enchantment follows. Bright conversation, the picture window, travel stories speckled with unsavory characters, the Dahlias glowing in their bowl, an occasional quote from Poe. The crossword puzzle has been done with the exception of one word. Debate follows. There are Gladiolas on Douglas's piano in the other room.

Dinner is broiled fish garnished with peppers, onions, tomatoes, chopped just so in the blender. Small red potatoes stay warm in the double boiler and there are green beans, patiently waiting for the transition from cocktails, to the kitchen, to the screened in porch. Plates are served, wine is uncorked. Wickham's tomatoes and white peaches are practicing perfection on the turquoise table in the corner of the porch. Decisions are made about who will sit facing the setting sun, whether or not to roll down the blinds. Dinner unfolds: art forgeries, book reviews, politics, a wicked piece of news, a dash of baseball. Candles are lit and placed under their hurricane shades. Brad makes a salad in the red and white metal platter. Coffee is served. A knife and a ripe peach.

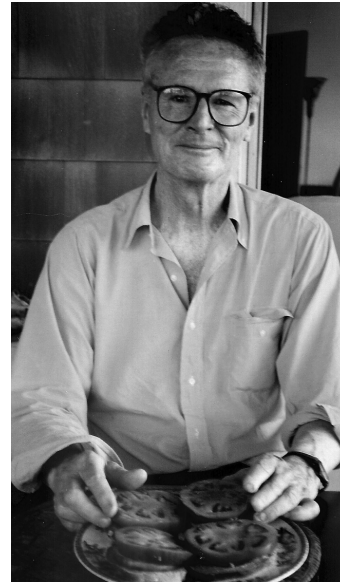
Dishes are stacked, seats are chosen in the living room, games begin. Wit, literary expertise, a competitive streak and stamina are required. There is more laughter than anyone thought possible during the work week. Guests nip vodka in the

[WHITE PEACHES]

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from left
Greek Salad, The Porch
Gore Vidal, Ruth Rendell
Brad's Famous Onion Sandwich
Mimbou

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kitchen while they are “out” and take a stab at the stack of plates in the sink. Soon it will be time to “blast off,” Moore prose for running the dishwasher. Hats are worn, old canes and raincoats found in back closets make an appearance. There are nightcaps. Books are chosen before climbing the stairs to bed. No more than a chapter is accomplished before the waves on the beach signal sleep.

Certain tea cups are exclusive, others are not. The big pot of tea is topped off, then topped off again. It gets weaker and weaker, but then the fish cakes are ready and nobody thinks any more about tea. They come out of the broiler, slightly charred, sizzling and crispy. A crunch gives way to a smooth creamy interior: bliss in the morning. Shopping is discussed, the ingredients for Brad’s Greek Salad are jotted down on a small piece of paper with an equally small pencil on the lead topped table by the old rotary phone. What is the weather doing? When is high tide? Wine stocks are checked.

[HATS ARE WORN]

Seasonal choices are made: has white corn come in yet? Are there enough green beans for the salad? Who is staying for lunch and who must go back to town.

How long will it be before Brad comes back with the Times? What to do until then? Fix the screen door, weed the brick patio, eradicate the P.I. on the path to the beach, mend that deck chair. Multiple copies of the Times arrive; everyone gets a go at the crossword, in their own time, in their own way. Is there time to finish the book that was started on Friday night? Yes, maybe, down on the beach.

The beach is empty and warm. A long swim quiets the mind that has begun to seize up in anticipation of Monday. The book is finished, the pleasure complete. Brad is making the salad: feta and ripe tomatoes, kalamata olives, arugula, lots of red onion. There is wine from Pellegrini, coffee and small chocolate cookies. There is the view over the salt meadow, the bay, the horizon line, the

[RED ONIONS]

lazy midday heat. There is the incessant peeping of the young Ospreys. Soon they will be taking flying lessons. Everyone settles in for a nap or the Times. Quiet reigns supreme. Is there time for one more swim before leaving? Yes. A dip, then suits are hung out to dry in the sun. Bags are packed, shoes put on, good-byes are exchanged. Such is love.

[SHOES PUT ON]

from left
Salt Meadow
Sarah, Mary, Brad

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