

Coleman Barks

an excerpt of

Starting Out from Ted Hughes's Letters

He would have his children make lists of similes
and reward them thruppence each for the good ones.
So & so is *like* so & so.

This list rose up in me when I read that.
A pot is like a possibility.
A beef stew is like a pile of leaves with children hiding in it.
The end of a love affair is like the rest of my life.
A pair of glasses set out on the desk is like forgetting your name.
A rainy late afternoon playing the board game Sorry
with two grandsons, Tuck (11) and Woody (7),
and my son Benjamin (45) is like
the peach basket James Naismith nailed ten feet up
at Springfield College in Massachusetts, December 1891,
trying to keep his delinquent students active but noncombatant,
indoors during the winter. They used a soccer ball.
The joy of being side by side touching shoulders with someone
so loved and so different from one's own self is like a simile.
Being wonderfully full of oneself is like
feeling mean and forgetting your heart.
Surely something will survive this
self-destructing love that pulls us along.