Hot Time In The Summertime

David Loveall*
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Abstract

THE plump brown grasshopper hit with a small splash at his feet. Not bothering to land on its legs, it skidded and rolled almost as far as it jumped, before righting itself and leaping again. Laughing quietly at the insect, he looked up the road to the shimmering horizon...
THE plump brown grasshopper hit with a small splash at his feet. Not bothering to land on its legs, it skidded and rolled almost as far as it jumped, before righting itself and leaping again. Laughing quietly at the insect, he looked up the road to the shimmering horizon.

The blazing heat tempted him to shed his shirt, which was soaked with perspiration, but he decided he might lose rides. His arm protected his eyes as he lay on his bag. A single streaked cloud wandered aimlessly around the edge of the world, the only blot on an otherwise flawlessly brilliant sky. He would have been better off stopping back at a dusty dirt road intersection. At least someone might be able to take him to a better spot—anywhere would be better than this.

A combine with flashing blades inched slowly across a hillside in the middle of rows and rows of golden wheat. He realized that his back was melting into his shirt and stood up. As he shut his eyes tightly, the blood rushed from his head and he swayed unsteadily. Legions of tiny black dots covered his view and receded only to be replaced by more. When he moved his arms and shook his head, they dissipated without a fight.

A new sound faded slowly into the backdrop of crickets and the rustling of grass. Whining softly in the distance, a car reached the crest of the horizon and approached turtle-like. The heat waves undulating near the ground fashioned it into a figure of Gaugin, broke it into pieces, and reformed it into a car as it got closer. The engine pulsated lazily as he brushed the dust off and ran a red handkerchief across his face.
The car slowly changed to a small truck, rusted and dirty. It took ages to cover the few miles of flat blacktop to the dirt road. He began his time-honored routine. Nonchalantly, he held the top of the duffel bag and rested its weight on the ground. He closed his eyes, deciding that this one had to pick him up. His hand was sweating as his thumb went up, but he put on a brave smile to show whoever was driving he was harmless.

The truck kept traveling down the straightaway, then seemed to slow down. Finally, he could leave the grit, heat, and interminable drone of insects. Suddenly he realized that it wasn’t stopping at all; it was just trying not to hit him. His hopes sank to the ground and were covered by swirling, choking dust as the truck whooshed by and the driver waved.

His thumb dropped limply to his side as he swore under his breath and dropped onto his bag. A grasshopper landed with a small splat at his feet as he closed his eyes and listened to the world.

Poem

by Anne Church

Speech, Junior

Elves live in his head
Smiling from behind his eyes,
Singing in his laugh.