

Sketch

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The Willow

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The Willow

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Abstract

SHE FELT she must lift her head neatly and take a deep, noiseless breath and relax her eyes here for a moment, for all the aching it suddenly brought up inside her...

possible. They are so sure of this fact that they have never wasted time in vain attempts to pick one of the beasts up in that fashion. And so when they saw me carrying Theodosia by the tails they could not at first believe their eyes, then began to look for an explanation. And, from their premises they proceeded with perfect logic. Since I was doing with Theodosia what could be done with no catoid, then Theodosia was no catoid at all, and neither was her child Gustave. They were mere imposters, some catoidoid breed picked up from some odd corner of space, and no more sacred than you or I."

—George Cowgill, *Sci. Grad.*

The willow

SHE FELT she must lift her head neatly and take a deep, noiseless breath and relax her eyes here for a moment, for all the aching it suddenly brought up inside her. Maybe turn her palms upward on her lap to hold it, almost, or at least make some cry, some trillish, silly sound just to realize where she was now.

But Jim was right there in the car beside her.

She sank down into the car seat and fitted her neck back against the curve of the seat and placed her eyes on the clock in the dashboard, the glove compartment door, the foggy corner of the windshield on her side.

To look beyond these, outside, to the trees, the scrub along the creek, would really only be foolish of her, because it bothered her, and Jim wouldn't stop the car just for such a wave of silliness.

But in a few seconds she spoke out loud.

"Are you tired, dear?"

"No. We've got to make Spencer City tonight."

"I thought you might be tired."

The slippery afternoon light flickered now because the road was deeply shaded through here. They moved on through it. Like putting on a habit, she thought. Like moving inside a secret.

"Jim, let's stop a minute. There's a small road up here beyond that sign that was never used very much. I'd like to stretch my legs a bit."

Her voice had not shown it much.

“Jim? . . . You need a break, I think.”

“That’s all right. We’ll be there within an hour and I’ll buy you a good steak dinner.”

“I’m not hungry, really, Jim.”

“Well, I am.”

“Would you like to have me drive for a while?”

“I told you I could drive all day. I just want to get to Spencer City by tonight and then we’re set. I’m hungry, though. Then I’ll give you a good steak dinner. I’m OK.”

Jim’s only conception of a good dinner was a steak dinner and he always ruined it with the cheap catsup kept on restaurant tables.

The road turned and turned and sprung out onto the prairie, where the far-off sad sun was almost gone, and an evening coldness was slipping over the brittle plane of grass.

Down the road, behind them now, back up in the glen about a hundred yards down the creek was the willow they’d made a playhouse, over a deep piece of sod that jutted right out over the water, where they’d swept the dirt like a floor with her doll-house broom, and hidden things under the biggest root that was the entrance step, too. Perhaps it was still there.

That was eighteen years ago. But it was behind them now. The car kept on in a straight, concrete line with a stripe down the middle.

It had really been very strange and silly of her and she was glad she had not made herself look foolish to Jim. Yes, she was.

—Elinor Holmberg, *Sci. Jr.*

The second president

“SOMEONE’S LOOKING for you, Annie.” “Looking for me?” I looked up from the flat I was painting for the last scene of the *Mad Woman of Chaillot*. I had sticky gurg up to my elbows, all over my stiff jeans and sweater and even in my hair. “I’m not fit to see anyone. Besides everyone I know in the state is either here in the workshop or next door in rehearsal.”