May Afternoon

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Abstract

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IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL May afternoon — the kind that makes you feel all lazy and sluggish inside — the kind that makes you forget your cares and dream of a little boy's summer. I rolled over on my blanket and stared at the crystal blue sky. With closed eyes, I tried to look at the sun, but all I could see was the dull brownness of nothing that always appears when you look at a bright object with your eyes shut.

The gentle breeze whispered to the tall grasses, and they nodded their heads. Then it would become still, and the earth was quiet, as if it were concentrating on growing — new life that bursts into greenness every spring, and then withdraws to dull brownness in the autumn.

From somewhere off in the distance, a dog barked — sharp and clear in the hot, sluggish air. A breeze brought the whine of a model-airplane closer to my ears. As I lay there on the hillside and let my brain slip into the blissful state of nothingness, other sounds which I had not been aware of before now seemed plain and audible: the far-off shrill voices of laughing children, the occasional muffled rumble of an auto going down the street a few hundred feet away, or the rasping crackles of blackbirds flitting among the evergreen trees. I stretched out, relaxed my muscles and let the wind blow cool blasts over me. Suddenly I heard the low monotonous purring of an airplane in the distance — probably flying on to some large city.

I propped myself up on my elbow and squinted into the blinding sun, but only the steady droning of the plane was proof of its existence. I opened my eyes and blinked in surprise at how yellow everything appeared. Even the pine
trees seemed to radiate yellowness as if I were looking at them through sunglasses.

White puffy marshmallow-like clouds were now floating overhead, probably to drift off into the infinite horizon. As I watched them, their internal movement changed—billowing and contracting to form new shapes and grow larger as they passed out of sight.

Green—it was all I could see when I looked away from the sky. Hundreds of separate shades of it, all mingling with the various shadows of black that were cast by objects rustling with the breeze,—it was in every bush, every tree, and every blade of grass. The darker outline of a bush appeared on the waving grasses, and with each puff of wind, the shadow wriggled as if it were alive. All around me stood evergreen trees, each one seemingly with its own shade of green, and its own shape and height. Their tops swayed majestically in the wind, which sent ripples through the grasses at my feet and brought an occasional bee to buzz around my face.

Once again I fell back on the soft blanket, folded my hands behind my head and looked off into nothing and thought of nothing. Here was nature the way it was in the beginning. I could almost imagine that everything was growing—right under my feet, even though I couldn’t see it. So quiet and serene—had it been this way for millions of years?

How many times had this same peaceful and relaxing scene taken place before any human had been here to witness it? I couldn’t answer, for my brain had become foggy—and a thousand different thoughts were crowding out my answer. Soon they began to tumble over each other and I felt myself drifting lazily in a whirlpool of unconsciousness. Everything seemed to move sluggishly and became more obscure and remote, as I faded into the darkness of sleep.

—Dave Ross, Sc. Sr.