Hunting

Cole Foster*

*Iowa State College

Copyright ©1959 by the authors. Sketch is produced by The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress).
http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/sketch
Hunting

Cole Foster

Abstract

A heavy smell of people and dogs and warmed-over coffee sat comfortably in the living room; since this was the regular smell in the home, Bobby didn’t notice it...
A HEAVY smell of people and dogs and warmed-over coffee sat comfortably in the living room; since this was the regular smell in the home, Bobby didn't notice it.

Long a man in many ways, the slight but broad-shouldered youth would forever be a boy in others. He watched Roy Rogers dash across the TV screen on an errand of mercy for the gold miners in the foothills, who were marooned by a flash flood and needed food badly.

"Get that Goddamn dog out of here." slobbered a beery voice. And Bobby stared intently at Roy Rogers rolling in the dust, grappling with a badman. That'd be good deer country, he thought, as Roy Rogers finally subdued his illiterate, unshaven opponent.

The blank eyes of his stepfather had a moronic twinkle of too many beers, as he yelled again, "Din't you hear me? Get that Goddamn dog out of the house."

George, the pointer-dalmation, let out a loud howl, and Bobby sprang to his feet. He faced his stocky stepfather. His intense gray eyes bit into the drunken man and he spat, "You ever do that again and I'll shoot you." The older man's blank look returned, and he sank back into the old sofa. This time he didn't bitch about the broken springs—he never did when he was scared.

"C'mere, George. C'mon boy." Bobby kneaded the hound's dappled ears and the compassionate brown eyes filled him with a feeling of comradeship which he somehow never got from people.

"You wanta' go huntin', huh? Sure! Let's go! Let's go!"

His walk was a sort of controlled spring. The old pump gun which he lifted reverently out of its cloth case was shiny from much use on many pheasants and rabbits.

"Where you goin', son?" his mother called, a worn-out
woman, worn-out and shapeless from two worthless hus­
bands, from mice in the flour, and from skunk pelts hanging
on the basement clothesline.

No answer was expected, no answer given.

The cumulus clouds moved languidly across the clear
sky, like long, white, ragged kites. As Bobby walked the
rusty railroad tracks, a restless, pleasant feeling grew in the
pit of his stomach, and in his mind he flew up among the
clouds and looked down. He saw the backs of robins and
the lush, green softness of early summer foliage. And people
—he saw people, but they were small, and they were scared.
Like rats, only they used guns and words for teeth, and in­
stead of twitching their tails, they shifted their eyes as if
they were afraid of the rest of the world, or even worse,
afraid that they themselves would learn the truth.

Abruptly the gray eyes darted, alert, out of their fantasy
as George jumped a rabbit and forced him toward Bobby.
The old pump felt secure and natural as the stock snuggled
against his high cheekbone. The furry little cottontail
flailed his stubby legs in the supreme effort of his life and
then collapsed, the number six shot having torn his life
away.

The lad trotted to the dead rabbit and pulled off its head
to let it bleed. The head he threw to George, and the dapp­
pled hound easily crushed the soft skull and savored the
warm brain and eyeballs, carefully spitting out the fur.

Bobby and George walked on down the old branch-line
tracks and got two more rabbits before they came to the
pond.

The succulent young grass formed a rug for all the beings
around Cooper's pond. A fox looked out of his den and
wished that everyone didn't hate him so much, so he could
go swimming in the daytime. Bobby sat still in the jagged
shade of the tall trees which surrounded the tiny, clear lake.
An eye-watering stench arose as Bobby gutted the three
rabbits and the rankness curled his sensitive nose. George
smiled happily and his mouth watered as he sniffed the slimy
insides. Bobby slipped his blood-soaked hands into the
clean water and rubbed them until the redness was absorbed
by the placid water.

Bobby and George lay there beside the quiet water. Above the pond in an elm crotch was an old crow's nest. A garden spider had set up his filmy trap in it and ate very well, sometimes mosquitoes filled with rich, red, squirrel blood. And skimmers flew across the pond's surface with the ease and speed of marathon skaters.

The sun was obscured directly overhead by an experienced old walnut tree as the two figures trudged up the railroad tracks toward home.

The Old Man met them at the door. "Oh, no. That stinking, wet mutt ain't comin' in here. The on'y way he'll get in is over my dead body."

"You been dead for ten years."

The boy and dog walked in across the foot-beaten linoleum, and Bobby threw his rabbits in the sink.

His mother looked up, sweating, from the oven and said, "Three, huh? I'll fix 'em tonight."

—Cole Foster, Sc. Sr.

**Spring**

When the last of the wood has been gathered in,
And the stove shows rust where polish has been,
The tightness of the door and windows begins
To give me the feeling of being shut in.
By the calendar Spring is still a month away,
But the warmth of the sun at midday
Steams the black earth of the pathway
Between the woodshed and entryway.
Though in the fields snow clings in the draws,
And a wind from the west still blows raw;
From the river I hear the crows caw,
And the crack of ice in thaw.

—James Wickcliff, Sc. Grad.