No Death

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Abstract

They, with their timely tears, Packed him in an oak box; Tucked him in a cold, damp bed...
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“So I decided to find out what kind of a con game the guy was pulling . . .”

* * *

Two days later, Pete gave up. He had faithfully struggled through every word of the thick manuscript Dr. McGillivray had lent him. This had entailed going through the better part of Webster’s Unabridged. But there were no holes in the scientist’s experiments.

He had talked to the students who had served as guinea-pigs for Dr. McGillivray. All knew there was no possibility of fraud. The psychologist’s colleagues were equally convinced.

When he had learned all this, Pete went to the largest saloon in Ashton and got very drunk. He told his sorrows to the bartender.

“But the guy has to be a fraud,” Pete wept. “Only crack-pots believe in mental telepathy. ‘S like believin’ in ghosts.”

“Sure, Mac,” said the bartender. And he went away to polish some glasses. . .

* * *

“. . . so I came home.”

“And you still think he’s pulling something?” asked the managing editor.

“Jeez, I don’t know. I wish I knew.”

“Well, you better get the story written. We may use it tomorrow. I got some pictures of McGillivray.”

“Telepathy! It’s ridiculous. He must be a fraud.”

Suddenly Pete looked up and squinted furtively at the managing editor.

“How about a game of poker tonight?”

No death

They, with their timely tears,
Packed him in an oak box;
Tucked him in a cold, damp bed;
Returned him to the parental womb.

* * *

Rain dripped from the dried flowers,
Ran down the face of the white stone,
Ate wrinkles in the yellow clay,
Seeped into the sod—
Sought out the intruder.

Roots followed the rain.
Pale, thread-like,
Their tiny fingers gathered the resting dust,
Blended it into a shoot . . .
A stem and leaves . . .
A trunk and limbs and leaves.
Embodied the timeless dust in a new frame.

The edge of night

JOEL McWRIGHT paused and listened once again for the sound of the bell, before he unhooked doubletree and plow from the traces and led the mares along the edge of the creek, facing the sun, which now seemed no higher above the earth than his own shoulders. There was no wind and the smell of the mares was strong. He had not removed the halter or bit, for he was tired; and he walked slightly stooped, one leg seeming to stride farther than the other. He had rolled his sleeves past his elbows in small folds, and the sunlight glistened from the skin of his arms and face.

It seemed unnatural to have to begin planting so soon, but that year, when the end of March came, the sun broke out with too much warmth and the fields dried and all over the countryside the land was plowed. His own land stretched out before him, like an oblong piece of charcoal grooved and curved. He felt that a part of himself had been lost each year by the sudden upheaval of earth, as though time moved ahead of him when planting was over, so that he could see himself growing old, gradually, the way leaves fall, without sound, from an oak.

He was always measuring time: by listening to the sound