Capital Punishment 1955

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Abstract

Once, in a cold stony light With people filling the courtyard To witness the hand of right. We saw a man writhe and twist and then choke at the end of a rope...
The pain-crazed skunk turned, too, one hundred-eighty degrees, and defended himself as nature had ordained. Ralph fell backwards with his legs beneath him as though the brown liquid had struck him down. The fetid fluid arched from the hole to Ralph’s face not unlike a steady stream of miniature mortar shells. Sammy screamed again. Ralph rolled over and on his knees cried, “It got me, it got me . . . Mother, Mother!” Then he bolted blindly towards home. Sammy was still whimpering. He’d cried hard at first, where Ralph had knocked him down as he ran for home. Sammy didn’t know why he had cried so hard. He was glad he was almost finished when he saw Uncle Ed coming. Ed walked over to the hole and drew a high-powered pistol. Swiftly, gently he relieved the animal’s suffering. Sammy came to stand by his uncle. He saw the tension go from the little body and relaxed the hold he had taken on his uncle’s free hand.

— Tom Caulfield, Sci.’55

CAPITAL PUNSHMENT 1955

Once, in a cold stony light
With people filling the courtyard
To witness the hand of right,
We saw a man writhe and twist
and then choke at the end of a rope.

It was longer ago than that
Men were dragged upon the block
While ladies knitting and purling sat,
Were held by the hair in place until—
blade met wood with a knock.

But now behind a plate of glass,
Perhaps with noses pressed
Like children in a candy store window,
We watch a balded woman strapped
Gently, for we’re years from the rack;
A jerk, and then her fingernails are black.

— Richard Day, Sci.’55