Moog

Cole Foster*

*Iowa State University

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DAVIE lay in the brushpile near the tall wire-mesh fence and stroked "Moog" on the back. The six-year-old's hand caressed the short fur and felt the small sharp bones which formed the curved ribcase and then continued back to where Moog's sleek body enlarged and then rounded to taper abruptly to the delicate round tail which had no fur on it and felt like a tapered scaly file. Moog stirred uncomfortable when Davie stroked his tail, so the boy only touched it lightly and then put a sensitive finger on Moog's head. He ran his forefinger up the wedge-shaped skull where the soft fur clung tightly to the bone.

He could sense when Moog was uncomfortable through his sensitive hands. A lack of normal sensitivity had been partially compensated in the delicate touch of his hands. Deaf, dumb and blind, at six he knew the touch of everything in the yard, but he had seen nothing, not even his father or mother or the small white house where they and his six brothers lived. He had heard nothing, not even the clanging scream of the noon whistle at the canning factory or the roar of semi's on the highway two blocks north. Even when Rolfe had been run over, Davie hadn't known it. The wild Kramer kid from down the street had run over the lumbering, furry mongrel with his motorcycle.

Rolfe had been Davie's only companion most of the time, because both his mother and father worked and the boys went to school. Rolfe had dragged himself to Davie at the fence. The shaggy head had quieted after Davie petted it for a while, and then the boy felt that something was wrong, but he hadn't known what it was. Presently he had pulled his hand back through the fence and had gone
to sleep on the grass, happily feeling the flies walking on his tanned face. The black and white body of Rolfe, lying outside the fence with his ribcage crushed, had planted no picture in Davie's mind because he knew nothing of it. For several days after his father had buried Rolfe, Davie was restless, wondering when Rolfe would come into the yard to nestle against him and lick his face. He longed for the slick fur and even wished for the cockleburrs that had occasionally rasped across his thick little hand. A jumbled grayness pervaded his mind, and he frowned as the intensity of the grayness changed and shadowy forms danced before his mind which had never had the aid of eyes, ears and voice. And then he had run blindly about the yard; had tripped over the flower box and fallen. His arm was twisted and he felt even more furious. Running as hard as he could, he had crashed into the brushpile at the back of the lot and lay there exhausted. The grayness subsided, sleep overtook him then, and he had awakened to find a slight weight on his little chest.

A calm breeze touched the boy's face like the caress of Rolfe's glistening fur.

Gently the boy placed his hand over the weight on his chest. It seemed like Rolfe, only it was much smaller and smoother, except for its hard and scaly tail. The thing started and scratched Davie's chest, but the firm pressure and sensitive fondling of his hands seemed to calm it.

After a little while, the thing, "Moog," he called it or at least it may have thought that's what he called it because "Moog" was the only sound Davie could make, began pressing its back against his fingers when he stroked it.

A lightness gathered in his chest and diffused throughout his body. His passive lips and cheeks compressed into a smile, a smile of love and belonging, a smile of contentment and security.

He didn't see or hear his father come into the yard, nor did he hear the heavy-footed running. Feeling Moog become quite restless, he released him and felt the tickling scurry as Moog ran down his leg and into the yard.
He didn't hear the crash of the water-soaked board nor the faint gurgling twitter. He didn't hear his father yell, "Goddamn' rat!"

Davie lay there on the brush pile as his father carried the crushed rat to the garbage can and wondered what Moog was doing and felt the breeze that seemed like Rolfe's fur.

Cole Foster, Sc. & H. Sr.

Laureate

A poet, long since dead,
mingles words and cocktails
at five o'clock meetings of civic heads.
Noisy wives with their docile males
crowd close in adulation:
Women who savor words from scarred lips
of outgrown agonies; men who station
themselves to eye the smooth hips
of his white-gloved petite companion.
He leans heavily on that white-gloved hand,
waves an ever empty glass and champions
phrases painfully won, but in his command.
Face flushed, giddy with charm;
a neatly pressed charcoal suit hides
what little discomfort he feels; the arm
is ever present. It lends what he needs.
Only a head over other heads,
the poet, long since dead,
stands with muddled gaze
embalming himself with their praise.

James Wickliff, Sc. & H. Grad.