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a crack in the tree line

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About the Contributor

I equate myself with a tomato plant in process.

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A CRACK IN THE TREELINE

FICTION BY DAVID WIDDER-VARHEGYI

Mother and Father like to play tricks. On a day like today—the day Traf stopped heaving for good—you go the whole 16 not knowing whether it's morn time, noon time, or even time. All day long it just hangs around like a stray cat, not coming and not going. It just hangs, limp, time waiting on us to decide it's tomorrow.

My brothers and I run naked, darting through the house, out the front door, and as far as our imaginations allow. “Tomorrow,” says my father from his reading chair, “Tomorrow I’m planting a tree line around the whole lot.” My mother, she loves my father. She loves his rashes.

Today, who couldn't love my father; I even try squinting my eyes in concentration. This is what I come up with: he smoked like a man who had every comfort in himself.

Deer start the cat and my eyes follow the tree line until it cracks. My brother gets a whooping when he drops the eggs. Breakfast will be milk and bread today. I follow the deer through the crack and I start to cry. “How long has it been?” There have been no christ-mas-es, that I can recall, where that space in the corner found itself inhabited by the fresh cut tree.

Still, some force long asunder keeps my eyes fixed.
There they are.

“Why are your eyes leaking?”

“Hush, boy.”

“Why?”

“Go back and play.”

“Mommy's dead.”

PROSE

21

“She’s just resting.”

“She’s dead.”

“Hush, boy.”

A trick lingers over the freshly cropped field. Harvest come, harvest gone. Cats mate somewhere out of sight, but I catch a glimpse of someone coming. There they are. Rigid, row after row after row.

“Why am I crying?” One by one, the deer decimate those ancient totems. I scream. Mother and Father just want a good time. I just want comfort within so when I smoke some child might look through the tree line and see an old man at ease.

If I decide that it’s tomorrow will the trees remove themselves? Will the dog chase after the regular deer? Dear, me. It’s all beyond my concentrated gaze. No more tricks, mother. No more tricks, father. Let it be the evening. Let me run naked, howling, “What’s the matter, am I too fast?”

CEDARVILLE
REVIEW

22 From the veiny leaves drop new born, deep deep through the fertile clay; and each darling seed, each darling yet-to-be suckle potential so far through this randy supple bed that every where we are naught wails as bloody beautiful life emerges.

And there they were. The beginning and the end. One all-consumable harvest of the young and old and short and tall; every single piece—one moment of kinetic emotellect—rushing through yesterday, through tomorrow, and back into this now.

So through a silky robe falling across the crack in our familial perimeter, draped on the four corners of where we have been, where we are, where we would like to be, and where we will be; I peer inquisitively, nervously, unsteadily into the solemn harvest of my fore-mothers and fore-fathers; my yet to be conceived seed covered in a faithful cold sweat of terror. My field is bare (bone). Plowed and prepared, all ready for the night to come. And if the deer come to chew this putrid sprout, may the little naked cowboys and little naked Indians slay the ghosts of my future dreams.

I might live forever in that crack, wary of tricks.