

Armfuls of leaves that are powdered with mold.  
They will kneel by their children and help them to stack  
The splinters in tepees. Their hands will shelter the flame  
Till you streak up beyond them. They will watch you, Fire,  
And laugh to see your witching fingers stretch  
For the fallen tree trunk they brought your flame arches,  
Their blood whirls as you pirouette around the end of a log—  
They hug their knees, their faces baking, eyes reflecting you  
With the brief reliving of the life of the tree,  
In the cloudy sky-flame, dusty-leaf flame,  
Golden rod and cardinal flame, and rain-gray smoke.  
They and their children will watch you, Fire.

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## Rain Mood

*Jake Verduin*

Sci. '39

ON A dreary evening in October I am emerging from our semi-basement apartments to attend a meeting at the Memorial Union. I climb up the three concrete steps and scuttle through a cinder-surfaced alley to reach Lincoln Way. There are round murky puddles in the alley, because it is raining. It is raining small, cold drops and the air feels clammy like the handshake of a freshman girl. Out on Lincoln Way the neon lights glow purposefully in the wet air as if they are determined to look warm in spite of the cold. I am low in my mind.

At the cigar store I turn across Lincoln Way, where the yellow lights of cars swish across gleaming pavement, and tires make a sucking noise. The lamps on the campus bridge make dull moons of reflection on the sidewalk, and red-haw trees on the hillside huddle like sheep in the rain. My hair gets matted down by the small, cold rain drops. Sometimes my roommate asks me why I don't comb my hair, but once I combed my hair and it still looked like this.

I leave the sidewalk and turn in to the gravel path that follows the north shore of Lake LaVerne. I am low in my mind. I am so low in my mind that I seem to be dragging on the gravel. I have only three bucks in my pocket, but that isn't why I am low. The

two inlays that the dentist put in my teeth are sensitive and they register every beat of my heart, but that isn't why I am low. Fact is, I don't know why I am feeling low. Psychologists say that moods go in cycles, like business, and you've just got to take the low spots and wait for a happy mood to come.

**A**HEAD of me somebody steps in a puddle—a deep one. He mutters reverent words in an irreverent voice and mentions lights which aren't where they're needed most. I say to myself, "This is the north shore of LaVerne, you dope! How would women land their men if they didn't have the advantage of dark places like this one?" And I observe that my sense of humor, such as it is, operates even when I am low in my mind.

I skirt the lake, hunching my shoulders under the arching willows, because the water they have been collecting all day chooses that moment to fall. Across the curved drive, pad up the soggy gangplank and through the revolving doors. In the lobby I chart an apologetic course through a mass of powdered females in revealing formals and I escape up the stairway to second floor. The meeting is in room 201 but I am fifteen minutes early; so I go to room 224 instead, because I am so low in my mind.

When I open the door, music hums out vibrant and dramatic. The lights are dark, except one in the corner by the record player. Eight people are slumped in easy chairs, resting in the glow of the music. I take a chair by the window and put my feet on the rung of another chair. I love the stately music that is played here. These strong strings that sing and cry by turns. They call this music high-brow and say it is appreciated only by cultured people, but I am not cultured people. My mother is not a lady. If you should ask my mother, "Are you a lady?" she would say, "No, I am only a woman." But still I love this graceful majestic music. It seems to soak in and fill every nerve with fresh aliveness; I feel the lowness of my mind begin to lift.

Then the symphony is over and the next number is a Marine Band March, written by that great institution, John Philip Sousa, who wasn't a marine at all but a sailor. This march is a breezy thing! Bright blasts of trumpets go swirling up and down, the way dry leaves blow between corn rows when the strong wind is north. The happy, high notes of flutes follow close on each swirl of the horns, and small drums cluck in quiet places. It re-

minds me of the fine concerts I have heard and what a lift they have given me. They are beautiful memories to decorate the halls of my murky thoughts. Like hanging a Rembrandt in a barn, you say? Well, a Rembrandt in a barn would still be a Rembrandt. Also I think how there is still much powerful music waiting for me to hear in the near and distant future. Life is good and holds much of pleasure.

**M**Y TEETH still register each beat of my heart and the rain blows cold on the window pane, but I am not low in my mind anymore. I remember that it tells in the Bible how, when an evil spirit from the Lord would come upon King Saul, young David would play his harp and the spirit would depart. I've often wondered about the "evil spirit from the Lord" part. I don't believe the Lord sends evil spirits upon us. I rather think they arise from muddy depth in our own souls. But of this I am sure, that music has what it takes to lift us again.

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## Detail

*Geraldine Hogrefe*

H. Ec. Sr.



You did not see the delicate plant outlined against patterned snow,  
One scarlet fruit shivering in miniature perfection upon its stem.  
But you did not know—  
For you were looking toward the misty hills with dream-filled eyes.  
Your boot left only a blue-shadowed hollow, stained by the scarlet  
of crushed fruit.  
You did not know.

*March, 1940*