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There was Magic in It

Leo Swartz
Western Michigan University

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There was Magic in It...

Leo Swartz

The sunshine was creeping slowly along the leaves of the textbook on my desk. I knew when it would reach the torn bottom of the pages, twilight would slink through the valley of the Rhine. In spite of this eagle-eyed person in front of us, we all would have liked to throw our books in the corner and to hasten into the curling fields and mysterious woods. However, there was a strong discipline in our boarding-house and only on Sunday afternoon were we allowed to spend our time in the country-side and then only for a few hours. Today it was Monday.

One by one closed his books and directed his dreaming eyes to an indifferent point in the darkening landscape. The day before I had read in Moby Dick: "Say, you are in the country; in some high land of lakes. Take almost any path you please, and ten to one it carries you down in a dale, and leaves you there by a pool in the stream. There is magic in it." The same happened with us. Fancy led us down to the nearby lake which showed its black surface almost hidden between steep rocks.

Later in the evening when we already were in our bedroom somebody said, "I cannot stand it longer." Everybody understood. We were lying in our beds, the hands crossed under the head, looking at the pale moonlight in the room, watching the huge shadows painted on the walls, and waiting until evening-inspection was over. Then, very softly we got up again. Hands grasped excitedly for clothes. One window squeaked. Frightened, we listened for some moments. Nothing happened. One by one leaped out of the window. Twelve times you could hear a hollow fall. We stood without motion. In front of us the windows suspiciously glittering in the moonlight remained dark. Slowly we turned and walked in the direction of the woods' ghostly line at the horizon. We smelled the fresh cut grass. The misshapen building to our backs grew smaller and smaller. The wind rustled the leaves and the nightbirds shrieked. A fox crossed our way. No one spoke. We were wide-open for the adventures of this gloomy night.

When we stumbled over the first boulders we knew that the lake was near. A narrow path led us down to the lake. The branches of the bushes touched our faces. Sometimes a boulder began to roll.
We listened for a moment to its dull leaps and to the answer of the echo. Suddenly, the lake . . .

"There was magic in it" — It blurred our eyes — it crept in our hearts — it took our hearts — it swallowed our bodies. The moon was no more the only one which bathed its pallid face in the ruffling waves.

A storm was beginning to come up. Heavy clouds were extinguishing the dim light. We shivered . . .

When I reached for my blanket on my bed the first lightning illuminated our bedroom. I saw that my neighbor's bed was empty. We rushed the whole way back. The storm dashed sand in our eyes, in our half-opened mouth, in our ears. It agitated our hair. Groaning trees bent almost to the ground. We held hands not to lose each other and fought exhausted against the weather. We stumbled down the narrow path. The waves struck, clapping the rocks, — the lake roared. We prayed loud. We called his name — no answer. Again . . . nothing.

Another glaring lightning flashed down the yellow rocks. Two yards in front of us our roommate was sitting on a boulder with a smile on his face. "There was magic in it."

Transition . . .

I,

no longer a sapphire hue and white,
As of a summer sky with staunch sails bright against;

I,

once turning the yellow, bronze and rust
Of each chrysanthemum, when autumn had commenced;

I,

now feeling the dread, gray winter cold,
Look back on blue-white Summer, golden Fall.
Now stark limbs make me feel so old, so old,
While, high above, the migrants call and call.

. . . Mary Lou Lemon