

1963

Sunday Morning July 2, 1961

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Sunday Morning

July 2, 1961

The road home was flat.
Miss Mary drove.
The old hunter, watching
The distant hills,
Small breasts against the plains,
Thought of Kenya, the rugged
Mountains, where death was
Close as brush,
More gentle than the
Slow defacing of flesh.

A little hump, fragile
As the light birds he
Picked from the sky
Decades and miles away,
He no longer heard the call.
The time was commonplace
To him who had woke
To his craft in a dozen lands.

Each of them home to this Oak Park boy,
Who wrote of sin as no small town
Methodist ever had,
Carving his prose with a new
Kind of tool;
Honed in the woods of Michigan,
Sharpened again by a fascist war,
And tempered for an old man of Cuba.

Pencils now were hollow in his hands,
The juice that flowed so ready
Had yellowed in his veins.
He was what Gertrude had proclaimed.

He woke Sunday to our tragedy,
Sought in the library of his exile
His own Kilimanjaro.
Feeling in sick hands the shape he loved
His mind slid back to Africa.

The gun grew hot.
Seeing the maimed lion
Charge,
He threw the bolt.

And against the limits of his time
Shook the Idaho home,
Waking Miss Mary to know.

JOHN COYNE