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never much love; but a great deal of understanding

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*never much love; but a
great deal of understanding*

for my brother

Lips purpled from passioned hours
in Pattok's grapevines,
the pair came bowlegged across the August-dry road,
their wet pants of less concern than the swat
of broom straw on a dry reissue of clothing.
The older led the way, it being his duty of rank.
The old men had their joke:
"Pete and Repeat."
They watched, laughing, before returning powdered eyes
to tobacco cuds waiting for rain
to be washed to gutters.

Building roads and flying planes was real for them then.
The war had ended,
much to their disappointment.
Domestic duties were in order,
except when some Krauts or Japs were found
around Cooch's woods and Andringa's mill,
then all were shot on sight,
by order of the leader.

The older was leader until the younger defected,
being opposed to tyranny.

The leader had no one to lead until he drafted
the younger with force.

“Obedience!” was demanded, it was received,
it was good.

“Obedience!” was demanded, it was ignored.

Silence. Turning to question the young silence,
the leader looked up at the younger, but decided to wait
for the rain.

LEE RENO

On the Vanishing Beach

I returned to watch the white waves
Advance upon the vanishing beach,
Where, alone on the sand,
We stretched to absorb the sun,
And to absorb one another.
Through a pastel shell, I heard
The pounding surf where I had run
To cool love's heat.
And I recalled the seagull,
All white but for black wingtips,
Motionless in the fading sky.

LEE RENO