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The Vanilla Tree

Pat Reynolds

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eyes to watch an occasional car pass down the street. Some nights he would run with the other dogs of the neighborhood, though this was rare for he had grown accustomed to running by himself. On those nights he was alone, Archie would search for rabbits. As he had originally thought, there were other rabbits in the area. The chases always were short-lived for these rabbits were always quick to escape. When Archie returned the next night to continue the chase, the rabbits were never to be found. Again, Archie was left to wander alone through the neighborhood.

"This is wonderful," Archie would try to tell himself. "Now I am doing just what I wanted to do." But what Archie really wanted to do was to chase rabbits. So, he spent many nights wandering through the yards and woods in search of a rabbit to chase.

Many seasons passed. Age slowly crept up on Archie. He spent even less time with the other dogs, content to grow old and search for the rabbits by himself.

One night, Archie came upon a rabbit nestled in the base of a tree. It spotted

Archie at the same instant. The two were frozen in a brief moment of startlement. Then, the rabbit dashed away among the trees. Archie quickly followed, barking loudly in his excitement.

The chase continued for some time. The rabbit would occasionally pull ahead, and then slow to let Archie catch up to him. This teasing reminded Archie of a rabbit he had chased many years earlier. The memory brought new spark to aging muscles. Charged with this extra energy, Archie closed the gap.

The rabbit burst from the wooded lot and dashed across the street. Archie was close on his tail. Suddenly, the dog was caught in a blinding white light. There was a loud squeal of tires.

The game was over.

Silence had filled the darkened patio as my brother and I mused over the tale. Night had crept over the house--the woods were now dark; the animals asleep. We would soon be asleep, too, with dreams of dogs and rabbits and Grandfather's lesson filling our young minds.



THE VANILLA TREE Pat Reynolds

Underneath the vanilla tree
She sat, and drank, and taught me,
By the rushing riffing Englin.
My mother told me histories;
Of the long walk over the plateaux,
Coming down into the cool river valleys;
Listening to the animal calls,
And pulling roots from the dry earth;
And of those fights and feuds
That will dog us all our days;
And of the great whalers,
 sails bellied like the spouters
Which they chased to the ice-ringed sea.

Underneath the vanilla tree
I recount these stories, telling again
Away from the shuffled dust of the square
But within the sound of the Angelus.
The stars shine through;
I enlighten the tree with their legends.
A warm movement of air stirs the leaves
And unsettles the crickets,
 who sing amongst themselves.

One evening, this shaper will be stamped
 into the form.
There are no names, only motions in this
 story;
The teller's skill joins the tale;
 the poet departs.
So I sing in Irminsul, awaiting the time
When there is only the legend.
Until under the vanilla tree
I will bury me.