

The Woodcutter
by Lenhardt Stevens

North of Boston I spent my thirtieth year
Perhaps I was younger, as the past is never clear,
Lived in a small cottage made of simple wood,
Whose creaky floorboards I would have fixed, if I could.
In town during the week I taught at the school
And after work I would visit the graveyard,
The reason being, I have often pondered,
The Dead know something the Living have squandered.
After supper I wrote in my diary and went to bed,
And in my dreams saw I the Woodcutter behind my shed.
He wasn't much older than me or my kin
Though he seemed ancient in his silent din.
There he chopped from sunrise to sunset,
I asked him if he needed help with his work yet,
Seeing that his pile was monumental in height
And would take lifetimes to even make a dent.
Without hesitations or breaks, I can't imagine how,
Ignoring the salty sweat collecting on his brow,
Although now as I recall his hue may have been of pall,
Or like sunlight reflecting off a porcelain doll.
When I awoke I would check behind my shed
To be certain I was then outside my head.
There was no pile, simply a tree towering over,
Atop two birds sang to one another in clover.
As the nights grew longer so did my dreams
And the Woodcutter's pile burst at the seams.
So unstable was its appearance I grew fearful
Of the nonchalant nature his routine displayed,
Methodically preparing, this be my assertion,
For a bonfire in case of Apollo's desertion.
(But if his reasons be more unsavory,
Or his motivation based on a fallacy;
Damn the ruthless driver of this work!
To lead the dedicated into such murk.
At what cost do we pay for such wrings?
Who is to say; there are more pressing things.)

Towards winter's bottom sleep alluded me,
Towering flames becoming my only company.
Closing my eyes once more to drift off,
I was greeted by an extraordinary light
With Springtime encompassing my sight.
Walking back towards home I took a chill,
A peculiar fever of an uncertain ill,
And while I stood beneath two singing birds
I cut down their home, divided it into thirds,
Steadied my body so my boots could bite,
And began to build a pile of staggering height,
To start chopping wood for the winter.
Chopping wood for the winter.

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