

In the Still of the Night

by Dan Hardesty

Many years ago on a warm night in May I was sitting on the porch at the end of another tediously long day, just letting my worn out body relax in the quiet peace of a household asleep in their rooms. Clouds tipped in silver by a moon hidden high above, raced across the sky stretched out like greyhounds chasing a rabbit around a track. In the still of the night the far away hum of muted traffic furnished the undertones to singing breezes trilling around the corners of the house. Once the shrill bark of the terrier down the street joined the music, and then the distant warning from a locomotive pulling its train of freight cars westwards to who knows where added to the feeling of life temporarily suspended in space. Eyelids sagged as the symphony progressed through its variations, and the nighttime mind began to work.

My figure stood on the bed of a giant truck loading lumber as it was passed from some unseen box car by hands from undefined bodies. They all moved together in a rhythmic dance, the hands pushing boards towards the figure and the figure catching them to turn and stack in rows on the bed of the truck. Standing on a finished row he started another row and then another. In silence the work went on and the rows grew and grew. And as they grew the tempo increased. Higher and higher and faster and faster the load grew. But he was feeling a new elation as his body seemed to grow with the size of the load. There was nothing now but the flying boards shooting to him. He caught them and with a twist had them in their place and was reaching for the next and the next and the next as a feeling of euphoric power swelled within him. Oh what a contest it was. The pile was high into the sky now and then the moment of rapture when the bounds of flesh burst into a giant halo of bright red light.

And then the pile to the sky melted to nothing in the fine red mist that fell to the eyelids of the head filled with the thrumming traffic, the singing breeze, the eastward bound locomotive and the continuing song in the still of the night.