

High Apple Pie in the Sky Hope

By Dennis Payton Knight

This is an essay about hope, the feeling that things will turn out for the best. It is among the simplest of all concepts, much more so than its complex companions, faith and love, and it sometimes is just what keeps us going when things look bleak. To frame my story, I'm borrowing from the lyrics of a song called High Hopes, written by Sammy Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen for the 1959 movie, *A Hole in the Head*, starring Frank Sinatra. John Kennedy borrowed the song when he campaigned for President a year later.

*Just what makes that little old ant
Think he'll move that rubber tree plant?*

If there is any virtue my puppy dog has, it is hope. Hope for a jaunt on the trail, hope for a bone, hope for a squirrel, hope for a rabbit. She also hopes she can climb a tree. So far that hope has been misplaced, but she keeps on trying.

*Anyone knows an ant, can't
Move a rubber tree plant*

Hope is a virtue shared by animals on the veldts of Africa and their captive brethren in the zoos and at the circus, by peregrine falcons soaring over the prairies of America and the canary in a birdcage. It's all about hope for a good meal, hope for warm shelter, hope for companionship, hope to be the leader of the pack, hope for offspring to continue the line.

*... he had high hopes, he had high hopes
He had high apple pie, in the sky hopes*

We in the two-legged community exist on hope, too, for sustenance, shelter, companionship, family, and freedom from pain and worry. But unlike our brethren in the skies and forests, humans have gone and made it complicated.

In the United States, we have this crazy system every four years of picking the national leader of our pack. It is called an election. Political scientists and pundits study and try to make sense of it, but what it comes down to is, every time it happens, half the population figures the wrong guy gets picked. In my seventy-plus years, that's how I've felt about half the time.

It is 2016, and I am in the crowd of folks who think we were robbed this year, that the hard-won progress of our society has been trumped with a capital T, and that we are at risk of going back to the seventies, fifties, or even the nineteen-twenties.

I should be down on the mall protesting this minute. But instead, I will heed the call of the leaders of my own party, the President and our defeated candidate, respect the outcome of the election, suspicious as it may seem, and give the guy a chance.

That chance is what we call hope, even if it is high apple pie in the sky hope, but in the meantime, let's keep a close eye on that rubber tree plant.