

lem or who's moving in up here next month, next year?"

"Hey, Red," Harry said, calling from his diaphragm to kill any quaver. "Who'd you hate before niggers? Who you gonna hate next? You got any plans? What if they work and learn and fit in and make it? Who you gonna hate then, Red?" He saw clearly that Sullivan would hate Harry Hall next, and had already started.

"That's enough. Not in my tent," Marino said.

"I don't worry about it," Sullivan said. His eye was hard on Harry, his hand with a cigarette in it steady before his face. "It won't happen in my time or my kids' time or their kids' time. You can fall out of a tree any day, but it takes a hundred years to walk like a man."

"OK," Harry said. "I'll see you around." He drank off his drink and handed the cup to Marcucci. "Thanks, Marino. Next year I'll bring up whiskey and you can come drink with me."

"All right, Harry. I'll remember that."

Nobody asked him to stay. Harry walked rapidly off in the dark, out of earshot. He didn't want to hear what Red Sullivan had to say next. Down the hill boys shrieked in mischief, and Hyatt's voice boomed. Harry turned on his flashlight and started up the path. Above him on the path there was another body with a flashlight before it. While Harry's heart did not leap up, it gave a small jump. "Who's there?" Brian said, scared in the dark.

"Cyrano de Bergerac."

"Hey, Dad," Brian said. "I thought you were still at Marcucci's."

They went on up the path together. "Didn't work out," Harry said. "How come you left the bonfire?"

"Didn't work out either," Brian said. "Mister Hyatt told a corny ghost story, scared nobody, then we all sang 'Workin' On the Railroad' over and over because it was the only song the man with the ukulele knew the chords to."

"You should have played."

"Come on."

"I know." At the camp, Harry put the want-ad section of the *Times* on the coals of their fire and laid deadwood on top. A blaze jumped up at once. Harry held Brian's sleeping bag open to the heat until it steamed with some forgotten moisture, then he closed it and put it on the boy's mattress. Brian took off his sneakers and got in. "Wow! Hot," he said. "You know, Dad, can I tell you something?"

That meant solemn time. "Sure." Harry held his own sleeping bag open to the fire.

"The thing is it was all right down there. Everybody was having a good time. I was having a pretty good time, too. I guess. But I really wasn't. The kids were running around and goosing each other and screaming. Mister Hyatt couldn't get them to

settle down and have a real, you know, camping party."

"That's too bad," Harry said, beginning to like Hyatt a little, in spite of the jealousy. "That's a shame."

"Then all the kids started to sneak off to raid each other's camps. They were all around, screaming in the dark. That's why I came up here. To guard our camp."

"Good man." Harry spread his sleeping bag on the mattress and knelt on it.

"Boy, I'm tired," Brian said.

"Been a long day. Go to sleep." There was no need to say it. Brian fell asleep like a ball rolling off a table. Harry watched him. A beauty. His mother wanted him to model, do commercials, put the money in trust for his education, his marriage. Harry wanted him to have a childhood. But his extraordinary looks, and people and events, seemed to conspire against a childhood for Brian. Perhaps some of us are not meant to have childhoods. I wasn't. Christ wasn't. Maybe childhood was another dumb mystique, another lie.

With a pang like being skewered on a ragged stick Harry wanted to get in with the boy and hold him as he did in bed when Brian had flu or a bad dream. To smell his cleanliness before it was gone, to feel the fragile, warm back buckled to his body. To hold, to hold him, one more time, while he was still a child.

Harry got into his sleeping bag and zipped it up. Then he reached and zipped Brian's bag shut. He kept his fingers in the great plastic loop at the top of the zipper and lay back and waited for sleep. □

A DOOR

This is a place where a door might be
here where I am standing
in the light outside all the walls

there would be a shadow here
all day long
and a door into it
where now there is me

and somebody would come and knock
on this air
long after I have gone
and there in front of me a life
would open

by W. S. Merwin

Copyright of Atlantic Magazine Archive is the property of Atlantic Monthly Group LLC and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.