

THE SENTRY IN THE CREEK

John F. Hall

At the far southwest side of my one-acre lot, in the middle of the widow woman's 150-acre farm, is a dirt road and a small, shallow creek. In the middle of the small creek I put a concrete sentry statue. It's actually a small statue of a man in jockey clothes, with a red jacket and red jockey hat. The weather had taken its toll on the stature and the concrete in the left hand crumbled. So I put the statue in the creek to mark my lot line since the survey pin in the middle of the creek is covered over in mud. I have another lawn jockey in the front of my house. It is intended to be placed in front yards as hitching posts, similar to those of footmen bearing lanterns near entrances and gnomes in gardens. I need to finish repainting that lawn jockey. I also need to repair and paint the sentry jockey. I believe I paid \$50 for the first lawn jockey. New ones today sell for \$600.



At this location, which is a natural fire break, I have a burn pile. I have weekly garbage pick-up. Sadly, William G. Hardrick, of Princeton, Kentucky, my garbage man, and 42-years, was killed when his garbage truck ran into a semi-trailer that had jack-knifed and was blocking both lanes of the highway. William was not wearing a seat belt.

Several weeks ago, a severe thunderstorm with 60 to 70 miles an hour, straight-line winds, blew over the ancient tree. This is a massive tree that may be at least 100 years old. The small creek stays dry until it rains, then it is like a flash flood, it knocks my concrete statue over like it is a piece of wood. I decided to move it over to one side and put rocks at the boots of the statue to divert the water around it. There is a bend in the creek that has a pool of water that does not drain. That massive tree has roots going to the pool that feed it for nearly a century.

I mainly put tree branches, small trees, and discarded wood into my burn pile. I had an old wooden barrel on my side of the creek. One of the fallen tree limbs crashed into the barrel. I'll add it to the burn pile. After the corporate farmer, Craig Perry, picks the fields of corn harvests the tobacco, I'll set the burn pile on fire. Nick Stanger wrote the song "Glowing Embers, Dying Fire." These are his lyrics: "I had never felt so helpless watching my decay. The scars were hidden too long and could not be healed. I had never felt so lonesome yearning for a connection. Searching for a reaction raising my voice with no resonance. But then the shadows dissolved, I felt the gentle caress of the rain. All matter merged into one, I found myself in the universe. I watched life and death intertwine and vanish before me. I became the fabric of light and I embraced the world. Bleeding into one, fading endlessly. Merging with the earth, I see clearly now. Colors I never imagined, rivers becoming oceans. Sky reflecting landscapes, continents drifting together. This is absolution I see clearly now. It's so unreal, becoming one. In Union we dream infinitely."

My son keeps adding wood to the burn pile, from repair jobs to houses that he makes. When the time comes to set it ablaze. I'll notify the Trigg Emergency Director, David Bryant that I'm about to set the sky on fire!

I'll stretch a 200-foot hose from the well house to the burn pile. A good friend, Rocky Spader, a fellow Christian Fraternity Brother, died the other day. We met 40 years ago. This part of the story is dedicated to Rocky. It's a song called "Fire and Rain." It was written by James Taylor, when a young girl, he knew, named Suzanne died unexpectedly. These are some of his lyrics: "Just yesterday mornin', they let me know you were gone. Suzanne, the plans they made put an end to you. I walked out this morning and I wrote down this song. I just can't remember who to send it to. I've seen fire and I've seen rain. I've seen sunny days that I thought would never end. I've seen lonely times that I could not find a friend. But I always thought that I'd see you again. Won't you look down upon me, Jesus? You've got to help me take a stand. You've got to see me through another day. My body's aching and my time is at hand. And I won't make it any other way. Been walking my mind to an easy time. My back turned towards the sun. Lord knows, when the cold winds blow. It'll turn your head around. Well, there's hours of time on the telephone line. To talk about things to come. Sweet dreams and flying machines on the ground..." I'll see Rocky again, on the other side.

I went back down to the creek for the third time. You see, my old Antebellum farm house sits on a hill, up from the creek. I wanted to take some better pictures for this story. It's very difficult to explain in words what a shallow, muddy creek looks like. It is even harder to describe in words what a massive downed tree looks like. There is a hymn that I like called "Start a Fire." It was written by David Mosley, Michael Mattson, and Burton Lowery. These are some of their lyrics: "This world can be cold and bitter. Feels like we are in the cold of Winter. Waiting on something better, but am I really going to hide forever? Over and over again, I hear Your voice in my head. Let Your light shine, let Your light shine for all to see. Start a fire in my soul. Fan the flame and make it grow so there's no doubt or denying. Let it burn so brightly that everyone around can see. That it's You, that it's You that we need. Start a fire in me. You only need a spark to start a whole blaze. It only takes a little faith. Let it start right here in this city. So these old walls will never be the same. Over and over again, I hear Your voice in my head. They need to know, I need to go. Spirit won't You fall on my heart now. You are the fire, You are the flame. You are the light on the darkest day. We have the hope, we bear Your name. We carry the news that You have come to save. Only You can save..."

Josephine Anne Miller wrote a short piece called "Look Beyond." These are her words: "Look beyond your suffering, look beyond your fear, look beyond your adversity, and find the Lord so near. Look beyond the problem, look beyond the now, look beyond the turmoil, and before Him bow. For, in looking beyond and bowing, you will find your normal sight takes on spiritual vision in God's sustaining light."

Each day, we can all make a difference in someone's life. It may just be for a brief moment, but that is all that counts. For Christ's grace upon grace upon grace in my life, I look beyond tomorrow and bow in honor and glory to His Holy Name.

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