

Arts Council

bridle and lead the horse past the scary spot.

Andy Miles told about the time young Tom Dawson took a girl for a buggy ride with his father's nervous little mare between the shafts.

"Tom took the swamp road because it's so nice and dark. Well sir, he was so busy with the girl he clean forgot about the bobcat. The mare spooked and took off like a nest of hornets was after her and didn't stop 'til she was in her own barnyard. Folks say they heard the girl screaming 'way over on the next concession."

Andy Miles stopped to chuckle then looked thoughtful. "That bobcat's been around a long time. Sometimes I think I oughta take the shotgun and get rid of it. Then I think — what the hell — it ain't hurtin' nobody. Bobcats are getting scarce. You hardly ever see or hear tell of one any more."

Chappie and I listened. My skin prickled the same old way. "The hyena?" I asked Chappie.

"Naw! There ain't no hyenas. Only girls and babies believe that stuff. Watts made it all up." He didn't fool me a bit.

laughed at him and skipped their silly stones all the more. I could make a stone skip but I didn't. Not in front of Chappie.

At sundown, we started home. The Miles girls, quiet for a change, were on the seat beside Chappie. I was on the floor packed round and about with filled baskets. Surfeited with plums and fresh air I fell asleep.

I woke to full darkness and the realization we had stopped moving. "C'mon Belle — Giddup now. Giddup." Chappie's voice was tense. He wasn't used to horses, we didn't have one and Belle was refusing to budge.

The swamp! I had forgotten we had to go through it to get home. I looked over the front of the buggy and could barely make out the shadowy bulk of the horse. She was taking mincey sideways steps and snorting. I had visions of her bolting, tossing the buggy every which way and throwing plums and kids all over the road. My back was against Chappie's legs and I could feel him trembling. There was only one thing to do. Get out in the dark, take Belle's bridle and walk

eavestroughs of his house. His body was broken on the stone steps at his own front door. Summoned, Watts and I came right away. As usual where Chappie is concerned, Watts flew into a rage. "Why didn't he hire somebody? He knows how clumsy he is."

I wanted to shout at him, pound my words in with my fists. Because he does not have the money to hire people! You forgot the whole world isn't cut to your pattern. Everybody isn't successful like you, Watts. But I did not. Watts knows all that as well as I do. It wasn't the right answer anyway.

I don't know the right answer — why God makes one brother sure and quick and the other fearful and plodding. Nor why each carries such a burden because of it.

Maybe we started off wrong, all three of us, but it is too late to change the pattern now, the pattern that was set for us so many years ago. My part in that pattern is to love them both but to stay close to Chappie, physically close, as I am now. My chair is beside his bed.

They gave his wife a sedative and sent her home. Watts went back to his hotel to wait. The light in the room is dim.

A nurse enters. She gives my shoulder a comforting hand on her way to adjust the tangle of tubes and bottles around Chappie. He stirs, moans, then opens his eyes to pure panic. He struggles, tries to speak.

"Take it easy. It's all right." the nurse soothes but he continues to struggle. Surely he will hurt himself.

I lean over the bed and speak slowly so he'll understand. "Chappie. It's me. Mae. I'm here. Right beside you. I'll stay, Chappie. I'll stay until you get past the hyenas."

The nurse looks at me quickly as though wondering what's come over me to say a thing like that. But it was the right thing. Chappie relaxes and lies quietly again. I resume my vigil.

No, there are no hyenas in Ontario, except of course those in the zoos and the dark swamps of the human mind.

There are no hyenas

Watts wasn't around very much now. When we moved he had to stay behind with Grandfather to go to high school. The sawmill was rebuilt and Father was back at his old job and when Watts came home in the summer, he got him a job in the mill too. Anyway, Watts was too grown up to pay much attention to us. And he wasn't free to go along when Andy Miles invited our family to go picking plums at his old home place.

We went in two buggies, Ma and Mr. and Mrs. Miles in one, Chappie, the two smart-alec Miles girls and I in the other. Chappie was important at the reins. "Old Belle won't give you any trouble. She's steady as a plough horse." Andy Miles assured him.

Father saw us off. "Make a day of it, Andy. Watts and I will do your chores tonight."

So, after the trees were stripped of fruit, we ate our dinner then explored. The old farm ran down to Georgian Bay. First us kids, then the grownups discarded shoes and socks to paddle in the cold water, squealing and sliding on the rocks.

The Miles girls showed off as usual, skipping flat stones across the water. Chappie couldn't do it, no matter how hard he tried. He never was any good at things like that. At school, he was always the last one when the kids chose up sides for ball. The Miles girls

her past the scary spot.

Could he do it? I wasn't sure. If he let the Miles girls see how scared he was, they'd never let him forget it, even though they were probably just as scared. So was I, but I was prepared to get down from the shelter of the buggy with Chappie and face whatever was out there in the blackness. I had to.

Hard to say what might have happened if we hadn't heard boots on gravel and Andy Miles' familiar voice. "Chappie? Kind of thought you'd have a bit of trouble. Hold the reins, son, I'll walk Belle along. Our old friend the bobcat must be on the prowl."

If he was, we didn't see him. We strained eyes and ears but there was nothing, absolutely nothing. Just the quiet of the summer night, the blackness of the cedars and the smell of the swamp. Only Belle's sensitive ears caught the danger, if danger there was.

Why does that night with its almost pleasurable exhilaration of fear come back to me now in a situation so far removed? Maybe it is because once more my brother Chappie needs me, needs me more than ever before. But this time, even though I am a grown woman, there is nothing I can do. Wherever he is going, he must go alone.

He fell while cleaning the

"Pieces of Olde"

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4TH ANNUAL
SKI SWAP

Sun. Nov. 22/87
12:30 Y.M.C.A.

Our World

The world is not just
One round sphere,
Nor' something that's
Just there.
It's you and I
And everyone,
There's nothing to
Compare.

Each day is different
From the rest,
Tho some appear
The same.
Memories this way
Are given,
To fondle, cherish
And to blame.

Our world, you see
Is just like us,
It grows from day
To day.
But someday soon
I'm sure it will,
Wither and
Decay.

We treat it as
A silly toy,
That's easily
Replaced.
Abuse it to
The maximum,
And let it go
To waste.

Can't you see
You silly folk,
The mistake that
You are making?
Don't you know
It really is,
Our lives that
We are taking?

Sheila Stafford

Unknown Soldier

Tears of sorrow
Splashed with memories
Of the young and old and brave.
But no one's grieving
Over yonder
At the Unknown Soldier's grave.

It takes a lot
Of guts and courage
When you leave
Your home behind.
Saying good-bye
To friend and family
Knowing your life's
"On the line".

For the glory
And the honour
Of his country
He did die;
In the midst of
Merciless slaughter
For the good
Of you and I.

This is payment
To a soldier
For all his labour
All his hurt...
A single cross
A blood red poppy
A mound of grass
A bit of dirt.

Now I shed
A tear of silence
For two minutes
All will cease.
Thinking of
That Unknown Soldier
Who will finally
Rest In Peace.

Sheila Stafford