

The Rain Bird

The Rain Bird sits in the old horse-chestnut tree unmoving except for his all seeing eye which glints and shines as it swivels abruptly in its glossy black socket.

His sleek feathers lie smoothly against his plump black body.

Down below him he observes people going aimlessly about their leisure activities.

On the village green is a near motionless, white flannelled pageant of Cricket. Nearby, in a well manicured garden is a tall, thin elderly man who dreams of his army days as he marches up and down his parade-ground lawn pushing the regimental mower, (stripes for the creation of), up and down, until the surface resembles the billiards table in the officer's mess in Poona.

The afternoon is one of those wonderful scorching days that are so rare, especially when they fall, as it did today, on a weekend.

Out on the river a young man blushes bravely as he tries desperately to impress his white muslin clad goddess who is idly trailing her hand in the cool fresh water.

He nervously struggles to keep the punt moving smoothly whilst trying not to show the large damp patch which was spreading across his crisp white shirt.

The girl gazes up at him from under the wide brim of her sun hat, at her Adonis. She didn't mind if he was fumbling, sweating and nervous as she loved him for himself and not for his style the silence is counterpointed by the distant buzz of a tractor slowly crawling around a prairie like field cutting and turning great swathes of golden hay.

The rainbird looks down on this idyllic pastoral scene which is spread out like a map at the foot of the great tree.

The searing heat of the afternoon was sliced by a chill gust of wind which sprang up without warning.

Clouds, which had not been visible moments before rolled across the valley like the black cloak of night.

Rain drops started to cannon into the dusty ground. Soon the rain was cascading in sheets and the calm scene dissolved into panic.

On the green the players ran for the pavilion whilst spectators tried to shelter under newspapers and picnic bags. The man who was cutting his lawn hid in his potting shed and worried that the rain would encourage the daisies.

The young brave in the punt miserably poled his craft to the shelter of a low wooden footbridge, where he clung to a chain and watched in dismay as a trickle of muddy rusty water ran onto his ruined shirt causing a stain, as though his very soul was bleeding.

The girl was still happy to be in his company, even though he believed that she would never speak to him again.
The rain lashed at the windows of nearby houses, sounding like an impatient suitor dashing pebbles at his lover's window.

After a long savage hour of torrential rain it began to ease and a dirty yellow rent began to appear in the storm lashed sky.

The wind dropped and the cloud dissipated.

The sun, calm and warmth returned to the valley, in that order, and silence once again ruled.

The umpires went out to the crease and pulled the stumps,

The gardener slept in his shed and the drowned rats in the punt made their way back to the shore.

The tractor was left for the next day. Up in the tree the rainbird looked down at his work, lifted up his shining head and began to sing, softly at first then sweet and loud, soft and strong.