

Clothesline / Tree

Ashley saw the clothesline 16 times the first day he was on the place. That is, he saw it, then looked away to other things, then, as he walked about the place, came back to look at the area where the clothesline stood 15 more times, but the clothesline only registered in his verbal thought again the fifth time he saw it, when he thought, "Old clothesline. I would get rid of that."

Thereafter, each time he looked again at the area where the clothesline stood, it was simply part of what he looked at, usually without verbal reference, simply part of the landscape.

Then, when he bought the place, he thought once, when he looked about, and the clothesline registered in his consciousness, "get rid of that, or use it to dry clothes," but he never got to either.

He had many things to do, and the clothesline was near the bottom of the place, over near Cracker Creek, where the stream ran down between banks of clean rock, so the clothesline stood in sun and rain and fog and snow.

Besides standing there, it began to think, at first, to remember, not in words, but in sensations, views, memories, faint smells, stirring breezes, smells in the breezes, smells of rock, of soil, of life.

Vaguely, the clothesline, that was no longer a clothesline, but two tall posts and wire connecting the two tall posts, and remnants of clothing fastened to the wire and blowing in every breeze, blowing with rustling and popping sounds in every wind, remembered it had been a tree, or part of a tree. Two parts of one tree. There were two uprights buried deep in the rocky ground.

The clothesline had been a tree, both parts of it from the same tree. It had had branches and leaves. Birds

stood in its limbs, among its leaves and nested in its branches, flew around it and into it and spoke to it and to each other and to all life around and to rocks and water and soil and to the sky above and everything in the sky. Birds singing helped remind the clothesline again that it had been a living tree and it had answered the birds with sounds of air moving leaves and branches, with sounds and smells of blossoms, of seeds forming, of seeds breaking loose to stir the earth with new trees.

Heavy fog inundated that part of the landscape when faint memory stirred. At first vaguely, as in fog, the pieces of a tree dug into the earth remembered this had happened before, senses of having lived as a tree, and it had let those sensations fade, because they wouldn't become stronger and call for action or decisions, and the clothesline again stood wooden and inert. Time existed.

But something about being alive, the posts that had been clothesline liked the feelings, remembered, called to the sensations again. When it happened the second time, wooden posts held onto the feelings as something desirable to feel, to hold onto. Feelings grew, as life grew in both parts of the tree, and both parts felt these feelings as one and rejoiced, extended small, tender, eager roots toward water, small branches toward sky, extended green, faint green toward blue sky, smells of life, of life beginning again in sky, in air, in earth.

Birds stopped to see, sang joy, sang welcome, sang to each other, celebrated the joy of life. Wire between became branches extended from each side, touching and then intertwining. Rags in wind fastened to the wire, to the first limbs, grew into green leaves.

Cracker Creek knew what began to happen, laughed with joy. My friends, trees, growth, Life. Gurgled, whispered, rushed, sang. My friends, trees. Water for you. Add this to your life, to life. Drink. Water into life, into sky.

Air laughed. Welcome. Sky laughed with delight. Welcome. Welcome. Stones and dirt and life forms in

dirt and the mountain felt the momentous change and rejoiced at life restored, growing, resurrection.

Welcome. Welcome. We are pleased you are back. We rejoice at your Presence.

Ash walked in afternoon sunshine and saw trees growing again where posts had been. All thought of ridding the place of the old clothesline flowed out of him, were gone from him forever.

Thoughts of welcome to all life grew. He whistled soft notes of whistling, a song of welcome. He sang. All life rejoiced together.

Sun far above sang songs of glory, loosed warm light into the universe.