

“The Order of the Long Leaf Pine”

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North Carolina Poet Laureate

My mother Maytle told me, “Shub, I need
Some pinestraw around my roses and boxwoods.”
So I took the old road (home from college)
Back to Plantwood Woods,
Empowered without constraint to air
Tough with taste and smell of turpentine.

The way I ordered the long, green, fallen needles?
My burlap sheet was on the ground (I placed it there)
And in my body the sun was round.
The Farmall Cub bounced a beautiful noise,
My trailer, homemade, on tires and rims
Of a Ford Victoria.

Carolina’s countryside floated in Pine –
The loblolly – the virgin long leaf of Weymouth Woods, Southern Pines,
Where I saw a cockaded, once, as I walked that forest
Behind the James and Katherine Boyd estate.
With my rake I could have scraped in heaps without the sheets
My mother made from guano-sacks for me to shoulder pinestraw to her shrubs.

Words! Tar, pitch, rosin, and one more time,
Say, “turpentine.” Rosin up the bow,
Draw down on In the pines, in the pines,
Where the sun never shines,
And you shiver when the wind blows cold.
No wonder “Tar Heel State” originates in song!

When you consider any other word Memory
Might chance to remember, bring pine
To mind, from Roanoke Island
To the Tennessee line: pitch, pond,
Virginia, here, downhome, where the land
Lauds stands of long leaf pines.