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The seasons revolve and the years change  
With no assistance or supervision.  
The moon, without taking thought,  
Moves in its cycle, full, crescent, and full.

The white moon enters the heart of the river;  
The air is drugged with azalea blossoms;  
Deep in the night a pine cone falls;  
Our campfire dies out in the empty mountains.

The sharp stars flicker in the tremulous branches;  
The lake is black, bottomless in the crystalline night;  
High in the sky the Northern Crown  
Is cut in half by the dim summit of a snow peak.

O heart, heart, so singularly  
Intransigent and corruptible,  
Here we lie entranced by the starlit water,  
And moments that should each last forever  
Slide unconsciously by us like water.

*DONALD WINDHAM*

## THE WARM COUNTRY

THE big brown buck negro George borrowed three dollars from Thomas Williams in the barrel factory one Friday afternoon. The factory stood in the centre of a cinder field heated by both fire and the summer sun; below its pot lid of a roof, steam oozed from a steam-run along one wall of the shop and the heat shimmered above a row of ovens down the centre. The men were running the last barrels of the day through the machines. Their bodies were filtered with sweat and coated with wood-dust.

Williams was a thin white man with pale red hair. Ten years in the shop had made him tired and quiet. His was the last machine. He caught the barrels as George threw them to him from the sander, put them on the machine before him and clamped down the metal hoops which held them in shape. The image of George, arms at reach, throwing the barrels, remained in Williams's mind as he watched the hoops slide down over the staves. George was

the biggest man physically that Williams had ever seen. Williams believed in living his own life and letting others live theirs, in minding his own business and speaking only when spoken to. But he admired George's strong easy body. The negro's strength and ease made him forget the reticence he felt toward the white men with whom he worked, and as he turned to George to catch the next to last barrel he called to him over the clangour of falling iron and the screech of yielding wood.

'Got five dollars overtime this week. Scarrett forgot to make me take time off for my overtime. And I bet he's sorry, because he watches this company's money like it was his own.'

The negro stopped his machine and looked straight at the white man.

'Yes, sir, I guess you'll be having a big weekend. Take home a pint or two.'

'No, I'm saving for the house I'm going to build,' Williams answered.

The thought of his house and his wife, Lola, restored his reticence. He glanced at George, who was taking off a glove and wiping the sweat and wood-dust from around his eyes with his big hand, then turned back to his machine thinking the conversation was over.

But George was still interested. He laid both his gloves on the sanding machine and walked toward Williams.

'If you're going to put away three dollars till next week, I sure would appreciate making use of them. I'd pay you back first thing,' he said.

The mention of borrowing made Williams contract upon himself and he became intent on cleaning his machine.

'What makes you think you'll have more money next week than this,' he said:

His remark was not intended as a question and he hoped that George would go away. But George was only started.

'I just got to pay this doctor bill this week. Honest, that's all, Mister Williams. You remember when I was sick last month and Mister Scarrett took me to the doctor to be sure I had the piles and wasn't just saying so? Well, he took me to his doctor instead of the company's. I didn't know nothing about it being his doctor, or owing a bill, or nothing till he came to me this week and said I got to pay it right away or be sued. You've seen my car I got:

I been buying it to ride to work in and to take my wife riding on Sundays. Well, I got to pay on that this week too, and paying on both don't leave me nothing to live on. If you'd lend me three dollars it'd be like part out this week and part out next.'

Williams had kept his eyes on his machine and had not spoken during all the pauses; but now, without looking up, he said:

'Why don't you borrow it from Scarrett? He's got plenty of money, I haven't.'

Williams disliked Scarrett and knew how he lent money to the negroes, one dollar for two back on payday, five for ten. Still, he did not want to have anything to do with lending money.

George knew that Williams disliked Scarrett.

'He won't lend it to me, Mister Williams. I asked him. I told him honestly what I wanted with it, just like I told you. And he said didn't no nigger need to have an automobile if he couldn't pay what he owed.'

'What a bastard,' Williams said.

'But I told him, Mister Williams. He's got two automobiles, you know, a little one and a big one. And I told him didn't no man need two automobiles more than I needed one.'

Williams laughed. When George saw him laugh, he shook his own body with laughter, loud and long, and beat his fists against his thighs as if in an effort to control himself.

'Sure enough, Mister Williams, lend me three dollars.'

Blue smoke from the extinguished ovens began to smart Williams's eyes. George had pushed the one remaining barrel between them and was leaning on it looking up at him. Williams looked at his machine, but as before the image of the negro remained in his mind. It was an idea of his that big people like George were honest and kind and that small people like Lola were underhanded and cruel. If she found out that he had lent money to anyone, especially a negro, she would curse at him and call him a fool. But if she did not find out, the money would be better with George using it for a week than it would be lying at the bottom of his dresser drawer. He seemed to see himself putting his hands out and touching the image of George, helping George's life forward by lending him the money, as he might help a child he found in front of a circus by buying him a ticket and sending him in. Tensely, he took his wallet from his pocket and counted out three dollars to George.

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'I have to have it back next Friday,' he said.

'Yes, sir, you will,' George said.

'Next Friday, don't forget.'

George thanked him until Scarrett came through the shop, walking briskly, chewing on the end of an unlighted cigar, and shouting for the men to hurry and finish their cleaning. Williams slopped a handful of grease on to his machine, and George turned back to the sander and with his hands began to push the mounds of odorous wood-dust from it into the incinerator.

Williams arrived in the white locker-room before anyone else, stepped over the benches to his locker and dropped off his sweat-soaked coveralls. Work had not made him strong, but enervated him. He was pale and thin, with no chest, no buttocks, not even a stomach. He walked into the shower, turned on the water, and picked up a small white piece of soap from the tile floor. As he soaped himself he looked down at his body, and an image, which seemed to be himself with George's huge body, half formed in his imagination before he stepped under the cold water and obliterated it.

During lunch hour the next Friday, while the men were being paid, a box-car full of the flat round barrel ends came in on the railway siding, and as soon as the whistle blew Scarrett sent the negroes out to empty it. Williams had not spoken to George, so he went out to the loading platform to look for him. He found him standing in the door of the box-car framed by the light blue sky and two smoke-stacks.

'Got your money?' Williams asked.

The company paid in cheques.

'I gave my cheque to Uncle Weaver to cash while he's out on the lumber truck. I'll give it to you as soon as he comes back,' George said.

The negro stood in the car towering high above the white man. Williams turned and went back into the dirt and heat of the factory. Half an hour before the five o'clock whistle he went out again to ask George about the money. George was still in the doorway of the box-car, tossing out the heavy round bundles of barrel heads. The car was nearly empty, and the negroes were exhausted. George stopped and wiped the sweat from his forehead.

'Uncle Weaver hasn't come back yet,' he said.

'O.K. I'll meet you down by the time-clock at five.'

Williams knew that any other man would have been angry and would have cursed. He wondered if the negro thought he could get by without paying the money, but he decided that what George said was true. He knew that negroes were the dumbest people in the world, and he laughed at the idea that George might try to fool him.

He dressed impatiently, without taking a shower, and was down at the time-clock by five. He leaned with his back against the wall by the clock and watched the stairs from the negro locker-room for fifteen minutes. Almost everyone who worked in the factory came and punched out for the night before he saw George's head appear around the corner at the top of the stairs, peep like a child playing hide and go seek, disappear, and after a pause reappear as he sauntered down the stairs toward the clock.

A worried expression was on George's face.

'He ain't come in yet, Mister Williams. I'm going up to the back gate and wait for him because I've got to have my money, and if you want to wait here I'll bring that three dollars down to you when he comes,' George said and hurried away.

Williams stood by the clock feeling hurt and out of place. George had been so unfriendly as he shunned him. But it was ridiculous for him to wait at one end of the factory while George waited at the other, and he walked through to the back gate. The gateman was sitting on the concrete foundation of the cyclone fence which enclosed the factory and was watching George and another negro who stood on the side-walk outside talking to a man in a car at the curb. He nodded to Williams as he came up and said:

'They were better off as slaves.'

He lit his pipe, crossed his knees with his hands around them, and sat smoking. Williams still felt out of place and he leaned against the wire fence without saying anything. After a few minutes George came over to the fence and asked if he could speak to him. Williams walked to where the negro stood. The brown face was distressed, the eyes sad and the mouth anxious.

'This man here is waiting to take me and Oliver down to the Hub clothing store to pay our time instalment, and he says he won't wait much longer. Could you lend me two dollars to pay him and get back five instead of three from Uncle Weaver when he comes?'

Williams tried to be angry but he was only terribly embarrassed. He said that he did not have any cash, only his cheque.

'Uncle Weaver's sure to be here in a few minutes, but this man ain't going to wait and they'll garnishee my salary if I don't pay. Please, Mister Williams.'

'I told you I haven't a damned cent,' Williams said.

'The gateman'll lend it to you. He won't lend it to me, but he'll lend it to you. And you can give it back to him the minute Uncle Weaver comes,' George pleaded.

Williams was glad to have an excuse to get away from the negro. Quickly, he turned and walked to the gateman and borrowed two dollars although he knew that he was doing something of which he did not approve. It was difficult for him to face George to give him the money for he half knew that the negro was betraying him. He handed the two dollars through the wire fence. George took them, thanked him with a clown smile, ran to the car and was gone.

At six, the gateman locked the wire back gate and walked through to the front. Williams followed. Ten minutes later, Weaver drove up in the long yellow truck and stopped to get the back gate and garage keys. As Weaver jumped down from the truck, Williams walked stiffly over to him.

'George asked me to tell you that he wants you to give me five dollars out of the money from his cheque that you cashed,' he said.

'George? What cheque? George who?' Weaver asked.

'George, the one who calls you Uncle Weaver. Who do you think? Didn't he give you his cheque to get cashed?' Williams demanded.

His voice trembled with anger. The old negro smiled, then said solemnly:

'Yes, sir, but I ain't got no money of George's now. I gave it all back to him this afternoon. I'm looking for him to pay *me* something.'

Williams looked at him, as though he had not heard what he said, and repeated:

'He told me that you had the money from his cheque and said for you to give me five dollars.'

But the old negro only denied having any money which belonged to George, took the keys and drove the truck away.

As he walked home through the darkening day, Williams felt his capacity for friendship hurt, his vanity bruised, and his love wounded. Gradually, he was angry. If George thought him stupid rather than friendly, George would find out differently.

Monday morning was cool. As soon as he reached the factory, Williams paid the gateman and went to find George. He came across the negro sitting on the loading platform with his feet dangling over the railway siding, enjoying a last smoke before work. George held the cigarette between the thumb and first finger of his immense hand and watched the thin wisps of smoke streaking away in the wind. When he saw Williams, he began a rapid stumbling speech explaining that Uncle Weaver had been afraid to give Williams the money, that it was a misunderstanding, and that he was powerfully sorry.

'That's all right. Just give it to me now,' said Williams.

His voice was pale and thin.

'I ain't got it now. I don't ever have no money on Mondays,' said George.

The whistle blew, and George hurried away. Williams stood on the windy platform and sucked in his lips until they were only a straight line. George had known that he owed him the money and if what he said was true he should have saved it to pay him.

When he went inside he did not say anything for he knew that if he did George would have an excuse, would say that his wife was sick or something like that.

He tore into his work with an obliterating intensity, but he could not forget the friendliness, the strength and the ease of the body working the next machine. His attempt to meet the friendliness had been frustrated. All week the frustration danced like electric sparks within him. The negro's body attracted his eyes like a magnet, and at the end of each day he was exhausted by the effort he had spent in holding his eyes back. He neither looked at George nor spoke to him. By Thursday, George was frightened of the silence and spoke to Williams. He said that his wife was sick and that he hoped Williams would wait another week for his money. Williams said that he was sorry but that if George did not pay him he would have to borrow himself. George offered to pay interest for more time, but Williams answered that he did not want George's money, only his own, and refused to discuss it any more.

He walked away and went to the machine shop to get some grease for his machine. While he was filling the can, he heard a group of negroes talking outside the window and, as he listened, he heard George's name. The conversation was about a coloured girl who had come to the office that morning and told Scarrett that George was the father of her child and would not support it. She was not very pretty; Scarrett had sent her away and told her not to come back. Scarrett did not like negroes coming about the office, and one of the voices said that if anyone was owed money by George he had better get it back quickly for Scarrett did not like George and might fire him. The talk was grave, but another voice laughed and said that it did not matter: if you were not paid what you were owed, you did not pay what you owed, and in the end it came out the same.

Williams walked back to the shop wondering if George would be fired. But even if George were, his life was carefree in comparison with Williams's own. The negro lived happily in a shack, and even the woman he lived with was probably not his wife. He thought bitterly about the negro's freedom and his own responsibility to his house and Lola, and he told himself that he did not care if the negro were fired. This was the day he greased the inside of his machine and usually he asked George to lift the heavy iron lid off the top for George could remove it without effort. Today, he did it himself, smiling righteously and straining the nerves in his arms till they felt like piano wires drawn through the flesh.

After work, when he arrived home, he found Lola in the kitchen, wearing a gaudy dress and with her hair tied up in a towel. She dished up the vegetables, poured the buttermilk, and they sat down to supper. She was so silent that he sensed something was wrong besides the fact that he was late and they were going to her sister's house after supper.

When she started talking it was about how little it had cost to build Joe's and sister's house, which he had heard many times before.

'But we have to wait while prices go up. We have to be the tail goat in everything,' she added.

He went on eating without answering. She stood up from the table and walked to the stove.

'How come there ain't deposits in the bank for the last two weeks?'



Calmly, Williams told her that he had not been to town, that the money was in the bottom of his dresser drawer. But she had looked in the drawer and knew how much was there. She began to curse him softly, letting her voice rise gradually as she asked if he had been gambling or if he had spent it on some other woman or on whisky. He pushed his chair back from the table and, without looking at her or answering, walked out of the house. The screen door banged, and Lola's voice screamed:

'Don't think you'll find me here when you get back. I'm going to my sister's house, and I'm going to tell her . . .'

Williams walked across the backyard and through the fields near the railroad tracks. Beyond the sad buildings before him, beyond the highway, the factory stood on a high cinder field banked against the buildings of the city. The day was not yet dark, but the sky was bruised blue and black, and in the factory the nightwatchman's light burned like an early star fallen to earth. That's where I work, he thought vaguely. He did not want to walk toward town or back toward the house. All his righteous feeling was gone. Lola had made him feel like a fool; but she need not worry, he was not a fool.

He turned and went to the Marietta Café and drank a beer. When he started home again, he bought a pint of Green River Rye in the liquor store next door and stopped for a drink in the alley on his way back to the fields. Lola was still gone when he reached the house, and he lay on the couch in the living room with the bottle of rye sitting on the floor beneath his head. Night came and it was dark when the bottle was empty. He was drunk. He could not see the furniture as he staggered into the middle of the room and stood there trying to imitate George's gestures as he threw the barrels from the sanding machine. His head was dizzy, his legs stumbled and his feet wobbled. The almost bare room revolved slowly. But the picture in his mind of what he was doing was bright and clear: George bent forward and reached, his body stretched in his coveralls moving ranges of flesh beneath the strong cloth, his two brown hands caught the barrel and spun it like a comet out into space. He caught barrels and spun them, again and again, till the air was full of burning cylinders like a shower of falling stars. Then George began to shrink. Williams could not see him; they were standing back to back in the door of the box-car, working with their shoulders bumping as they threw out the

heavy bundles of barrel heads. But he could feel George's shoulders descending like a chill down his own spine as George grew smaller. Williams dared not turn. In the dark beyond he could see the wild faces of the other factory hands, watching, betting on who would win. As he worked faster he grew larger and felt George grow smaller till George reached only to the small of his back. Then his end of the car was empty and he spun around. George was shrinking, shrinking, shrinking, till he struggled to move objects which were his own size. Then he lay between two cracks on the box-car floor and was no larger than a shrivelled brown apple. Fear entered Williams's heart. His eyes burned and blurred. With a great effort he tried to stop himself from falling, but slowly he descended through space, slowly thinking: I will get my money back. Then he lay on the hard floor.

Friday, after the machines stopped pounding at noon, the silence was like a steady noise. Williams shut the door of his green locker and walked out toward the paymaster's office counting the money in his wallet. His head was heavy from drinking, his mouth was dry and thin on his skull-shaped face. In the shadow of the office, the factory-hands sat or lay about the concrete platform and their voices drifted in the breeze as they laughed and shouted. Williams stood at one end of the building against the wall. When the paymaster's window opened, the men scrambled to their feet and waited silently for their names to be called. Williams moved to the pay-window with them. As each man received his cheque, he ran off shouting and laughing again. Williams took his and stood aside waiting for the negroes to be paid. When George received his cheque he was forced to pass Williams on his way to the factory. His large eyes looked shyly at the white man. Williams returned the look boldly. The negro was beautiful. The sunlight glistened on the curve of his full lips, the ball of his high cheekbone, and the cord of his heavy neck. He held his cheque out before him with the manner in which strong men handle gentle things, and he lowered his eyes.

Williams spoke with determination.

'I'll cash your cheque for you, George,' he said.

He continued to look at the negro, and George raised his eyes humbly.

'I'm going to give it to you, just like I said I was,' he answered.

Gesturing like a child in a play, he pointed to the machine shop.

'I'll go borrow a pencil to endorse it with.'

'I have one,' Williams said.

George turned back and accepted the stub. Together they walked into the factory where the air was warmer than in the sun. George rested his cheque on the flat end of a barrel and scrawled his name across the back in sprawling letters.

'You ain't going to take out but half of it this week, are you, Mister Williams.'

'All of it,' Williams said.

'No, sir, don't. Five dollars out won't leave me nothing.'

'I have to have it all,' said Williams.

He began to tremble. He had to look up to see the face of the negro even though the negro was stooped over, and when George lifted his hand for a moment Williams thought he was going to strike him. A shudder ran down his back as though he had stepped barefooted on a bug. George was talking, but Williams could not hear.

'No,' he said.

George said something about his wife having a baby.

'No,' Williams shouted.

His voice was much louder than he meant it to be and it startled him. George stopped speaking in the middle of a sentence. Williams put the cheque in his wallet and held out the money which was left for George. George waited so long to take it, removed his hands from his pockets and advanced them towards Williams so slowly, that Williams's outstretched hand began to tremble.

The money was gone. George was walking away along the aisle between the rows of smoking barrels and machines. The swerving line of his back dropped from shoulders to buttocks like a bare foot running from toes to heel. Williams could feel the body departing, moving away from him, leaving him deserted, stranded, spent.

He did not know if he were happy or miserable, hot or cold. Weakly, he walked to the locker-room and felt that he was going to be sick. He sat in a bench, shivering, staring at a small white piece of soap on the tile floor, thinking that he would have to take a shower if he were going home.

GERALD BRENNAN

STUDIES IN GENIUS: II

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

HIS LIFE AND POETRY

*Ecco chi crescerà li nostri amori (Paradiso V)*

II: POETRY

THE DATES

The poetry of San Juan de la Cruz that we want to read comprises five poems that cover between them sixteen pages of a small book. Only one of these poems, the *Cántico Espiritual*, is of any length: the other four are all quite short. Besides these he wrote a small number of *romances* and other verses, which as poetry have only minor claims to our attention.

We are able to date most of these poems fairly accurately. The *Cántico Espiritual* was begun in the prison at Toledo in 1578, and we are told that before his release he had written as far as the stanza commencing *O ninfas de Judea*. This, however, is less informing than it appears, since we cannot say in what order the verses then stood (two versions with quite different orders have come down to us) or how many stanzas were added later. But in all probability he finished the poem soon after his escape, whilst living at El Calvario, though one stanza was added at a later date.

We are also told that the companion poem, the *Noche Oscura*, was written in prison. The evidence for this, however, is not so good, since it depends on the depositions made by witnesses in 1627. As this poem is in the same metre as the *Cántico*, it may easily have been confused with it or else with another poem, to be mentioned in a moment, which is also about night. But there are strong internal reasons for supposing that, if not composed in prison, it was soon after. The style and subject are almost precisely the same as those of the *Cántico* and it describes an escape on a dark night, in disguise, down a secret ladder.

As for the other poems, we know that one of the most original and beautiful, the *Villancico*, which has the refrain *Aunque es de noche*, was written in prison. So was the *romance* *Super flumina*