

The World of Men

He was just a little boy,
And his right eye was crossed,
So he squinted it and looked
At the world through the other one.
His hair was like dandelion seed,
And his father's friends would tease,
“Where did you get that white hair?”
And he would reply with intended precision
(for even then he was passionate about truth),
But in a voice that squeaked,
“My hair is dark white.”

His father's friends always knew what to do
When a horse needed shoeing or a car broke.
There was wiry Willard McLaws who could
Put a strap around a refrigerator
And carry it up a flight of stairs.
And Ed Gillespie, who at rodeos
Could pluck a bronc rider from the
Back of a bucking horse when the whistle blew.
And Shag Tate, that his father taught him
To say was the ugliest man in town;
And Minky, who'd been All-American
Halfback and called the boy Sour Puss.

He followed his father into their world,
Watched their arm wrestling,
And listened to their talk
About quarterbacks and deer hunts
And cutting horses and Chevrolets,
And the eternal argument over whether
Shag Tate was really uglier than Rufus Bevan.

The boy walked a little spraddle-legged
Like his father—though he was
Knock-kneed rather than bowlegged,
And he tried to wave at people on the street
Using two fingers the way his father did.
And at night in his prayers
He said God bless Minky,
And Ed Gillespie, and Willard McLaws.

—John Sterling Harris