

ALDO'S LAST WORDS

When the sentries came over to talk about
the verdict, we began to study our blankets.
We wanted to be survivors.

Beyond the stockade it was about
two hundred yards of open to the forest.
Nothing was out there beyond, except
wilderness, and whatever waited.

"I do not believe what the wind pretends
to be saying." Aldo's voice did not try
to hide, but the guards were used to his talk,
and as usual he slurred,
and spoke roundabout.

"No," I said.

"The storm will be tomorrow."

"Yes," I said.

"But there will be this clear space
before dawn, before we sleep."

"Yes," I said.

And in that space Aldo told me
these things, or acted some of them out,
before they killed him in the morning
and let me go:

Mostly, grass is in favor.

Thorns are cynical, and trees don't care
about us, but they are good neighbors.

Many who side with us have purposes
that swing wide of ours.

Sometimes the borders and the people who
live there want to enter their own capital.

Suddenly a quiet dog will bark for days
and lap water all night in order to live.

Hands are strange—they touch brick
and moss, wander the walls, conduct
something, a song no one has
got around to singing. They want
whatever life can offer.
At the last they reach.

In the morning when the sentries came
I watched Aldo walk away saying:

Rescue me, Day.
Hands, be my friends.
I want to give you everything I own.