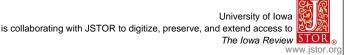
I brought him home, round-shouldered and numbed up for the trip. He dozed in the car, woke and looked with astonishment at the hills, gold and quince under October sun-a sight so overwhelming that we began to cry, he first, and then I.

## CLIMB

From the porch of our house we can see Mt. Kearsarge, the huge, blue-black presence that tells us where we are, and what the weather is going to be. By night we see the red beacon of the fire warden's tower, by day the tower itself, a hut on stilts, with windows on all sides, minute in the distance.

Yesterday I climbed to the top with a friend just home from the hospital. She'd thought the second coming was at hand, then found herself in a private room, tastefully furnished, on a ward she couldn't leave.

But yesterday we climbed, our shirts wet with effort. We talked and panted, stopped to look at the undersides of sage and pink opalescent mushrooms, and to touch the bright shoots of a balsam fir. Near the mountain's top the trees are stunted and misshapen by wind, their roots exposed by rains and spring melts, and yet they find purchase among rocks and hold their own.



On the summit we sprawled on ledges of gray granite, with veins and blotches of pink, and silver-green lichen, growing like fur. The flank of the old, old mother . . . We looked for our houses; shreds of clouds floated between our heads; and we saw, from above, the muscular shoulders of a patient hawk.