

Signs and Wonders

by Gita M. Smith

From here, along the northern road, the oaks form a phalanx through which no pines dare grow. Bag worms hang in their cloudy white hammocks. This is the month of webs when long-bodied yellow and black spiders sign their autographs between the posts of pastures. I find them beautiful; you would rather not look.

Mornings, before the heat returns, we take coffees out to the edge of the property. Indented rocks are our armchairs, and we sit and wait for the thrushes to sing their sonatinas.

I start telling you about a dream full of wonders — scientists had perfected holograms and could project works of art onto the sky for all to see — but you won't listen. Dreams are nothing, you say, cutting me off: meaningless *nothings*. The moment is spoiled, and I take my coffee back to the house where I write the dream down, longhand.

I phone your sister. We laugh and insult you, calling up instances when we played games (Password, Taboo *and* Balderdash), and you changed the rules so that you could win. I feel better; I have an ally, although it is childish of me, and I know it. The day heats up and a buzzing starts in the pin oaks; I am ready for the cicadas to go, already. They have cried incessantly for months. Don't we deserve one day of blessed quiet?

In late afternoon, I set the sprinkler so that the arcing water hits all the plants I care about. A late-hatching cicada has left its crispy shell clinging to a caladium leaf, and I risk the sprinkler to bend and collect it. Smoke, scented with beef and mesquite, drifts over from a neighbor's shed.

For a moment, I want this ordinary day to be transformed. I wish for a hologram in the sky, for marvels. For something grander than what is, for signs and wonders.

