

The Bee

to the football coaches of

Clemson College, 1942

One dot

Grainily shifting we at roadside and

The smallest wings coming along the rail fence out

Of the woods one dot of all that green. It now

Becomes flesh-crawling then the quite still

Of stinging. I must live faster for my terrified

Small son it is on him. Has come. Clings.

Old wingback, come

To life. If your knee action is high

Enough, the fat may fall in time God damn

You, Dickey, *dig* this is your last time to cut

And run but you must give it everything you have

Left, for screaming near your screaming child is the sheer

Murder of California traffic: some bee hangs driving

Your child

Blindly onto the highway. Get there however

Is still possible. Long live what I badly did

At Clemson and all of my clumsiest drives

For the ball all of my trying to turn

The corner downfield and my spindling explosions

Through the five-hole over tackle. O backfield

Coach Shag Norton,

Tell me as you never yet have told me

To get the lead out scream whatever will get

The slow-motion of middle age off me I cannot

Make it this way I will have to leave

My feet they are gone I have him where

He lives and down we go singing with screams into

The dirt,

Son-screams of fathers screams of dead coaches turning

To approval and from between us the bee rises screaming

With flight grainily shifting riding the rail fence

Back into the woods traffic blasting past us

Unchanged, nothing heard through the air-

conditioning glass we lying at roadside full

Of the forearm prints

Of roadrocks strawberries on our elbows as from

Scrimmage with the varsity now we can get

Up stand turn away from the highway look straight

Into trees. See, there is nothing coming out no

Smallest wing no shift of a flight-grain nothing

Nothing. Let us go in, son, and listen

For some tobacco-

mumbling voice in the branches to say "That's

a little better," to our lives still hanging

By a hair. There is nothing to stop us we can go

Deep deeper into elms, and listen to traffic die

Roaring, like a football crowd from which we have

Vanished. Dead coaches live in the air, son live

In the ear

Like fathers, and *urge* and *urge*. They want you better

Than you are. When needed, they rise and curse you they scream

When something must be saved. Here, under this tree,

We can sit down. You can sleep, and I can try

To give back what I have earned by keeping us

Alive, and safe from bees: the smile of some kind

Of savior—

Of touchdowns, of fumbles, battles,

Lives. Let me sit here with you, son

As on the bench, while the first string takes back

Over, far away and say with my silentest tongue, with the man-

creating bruises of my arms with a live leaf a quick

Dead hand on my shoulder, "Coach Norton, I am your boy."