

## Higher Up\*

Dennis Smith

To get up here  
is quite a climb,  
because the branches  
on the way  
are often far apart  
and big around.  
So big around, in fact,  
that I can't grip them  
but must almost  
hug them up in places.  
However,  
bigger limbs  
mean bigger trees,  
and once past all the bigger limbs,  
the smaller limbs feel better,  
even though you're higher up.

And higher up  
is better too,  
because  
it gives more view.

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\*From Dennis Smith's *Star-Counter* (Trilogy Art Publications, 1970), reprinted by permission of the author.

It's funny  
how the people  
all down there  
don't know  
that I'm up here.  
That makes me feel  
like I know something  
they don't know——  
that I'm up here, that is.

There's George McDaniel  
driving through his orchard  
with a trailer  
full of ladders  
on behind his tractor  
in the orchard grass.

I wonder  
if he realizes  
that the neighbor boy  
is in his tallest poplar?

I doubt it or he'd look.

Why, even if  
he put his ladder  
to the tallest apple tree  
he'd be  
so far below  
that I'd be looking down  
to watch him pick.  
And all the while I think,  
the wind slides  
through the leaves  
in rustles  
and the limb  
to which I cling  
sways from back  
to forth again.

He'd never see.

And Billy Devey's wife  
just stepped outside  
to cuss her kid.  
She doesn't know  
that I'm up here,  
for if she did  
she wouldn't have to worry  
what her kid was doing.  
I've been watching  
since her kid came out  
a while ago,  
and even though  
he looked up once or twice,  
he never saw.

And Maud Beck,  
Owen's widow,  
on her way home  
from the store,  
walked past  
and little dreamt  
a boy clung grinning  
in the poplar  
by the road she walked along.

I even coughed  
as she went by  
and wasn't heard.

I may be  
awfully high  
here in my poplar tree.  
Still I wonder  
if there isn't someone  
higher up than I am  
in another poplar  
looking down at me.