

First Place

Fortress Instructions

by Katy Beem

Before you undertake the construction of your own fort, be sure to have the following on-hand:

1. Tree (One will suffice; however, many are better.)
2. Fallen tree branches.
3. All-consuming drive to live outside, pretending to cook twigs and eat grass.
4. At least one hour of remaining daylight.

Directions:

Turn off *Captain 11*. (Too much Popeye, anyway.)

Depart the empty Dakota Avenue duplex—stop! Go back.

Leave a note for Mom in case she gets off work early. (Maybe the mangle will break down or Mr. Buhl will feel magnanimous today.)

Write carefully: “Outside. Hot dogs on stove. Love you.”

Depart once more. Traipse to the tree claim. Consider what a great *ABC Afterschool Special* this would make, if only you had a stutter or a new stepfather.

En route through the un-mowed field, vee your thumbs and fingers into plowshares. Pretend to harvest barley.

Prior to entering tree claim, side-eye: the Bible College, the trailer court, the snowplow and bulldozer lot. If the coast is clear, slip into the thicket of box elders and pines. (If not, abort! Go home and watch *Family Feud*.)

Choose a home-base tree. (Pine is best for its low branches. These will provide shelter from the deadly blizzard that will arrive any moment. Hurry!)

Gather dozens of boughs. (Take care as you disentangle from the grassy forest floor. You will need dozens, so allot plenty of time. NOTE: If you are working with a friend, be prepared to go it alone. The sky will darken, evening sirens will sound, her mother will call her home to dinner with a piercing gym teacher whistle that embarrasses everyone but her mother. But you must attend to your homesteading undeterred. There’s a deadly blizzard coming!)

Lean your hunted lumber upright against the trunk of your sheltering pine.

Craft a wood wall by circling the mother tree’s center.

Feel pretty sure this is a bona fide lean-to or perhaps a tipi.

Make a note to fill any cracks with mud and leaves at a later date -- perhaps after you've built a fire and ridden out the deadly storm!

Scout the ground for big stones and little sticks. Arrange stones in attractive circle. Array sticks inside using starburst pattern. Flint two sharp-edged rocks. Ignite for pretend. Rub palms together over flames.

Jab nearby leaf fish onto spear you've whittled using omnipresent pocket jackknife.

Cook leaf fish over fire for 30 seconds, turning constantly.

Feast heartily.

Throw fishbones onto fire. (Make sizzling sound.)

Sit. Regard the rectangles of light emitting from the Bible College dorms and trailer windows. Consider your friend who will ride out the storm having eaten Hamburger Helper and watching *Happy Days*.

Regard the sky. Feel the cold, wet pinprick of the first snowflake on your cheek.

Take shelter in your fort. Hear the crackle of dry cottonwood leaves, smell the tang of rangy earth, the high notes of sweet, pungent, loamy rot—so inviting you want to dig deep into the ground, burrow as naturally as a field mouse.

Consider spending the night in your fortress, for real, even though tomorrow is a school day. (Could you emerge feral from the forest, arrive at school with leaves in your hair, open your social studies book to page 36 and read aloud the paragraph on the American Colonies?)

Picture your mother at home, alone.

Emerge.

Hope no one tears your fortress down before you return another day to ride out another dangerous storm.

Second Place

Monuments

by John Nelson

These gray houses we see along roadsides
across the Dakotas, leaning into the cold wind,
must stake their claim to imagination's memory,
like old men telling stories against forgetting.

Once this old house was a load of lumber from town,
straining horses' shanks, horses with names,
horses further gone than the old men who built it,
men who cleaned their tools each evening after work.

I see them now easing down hallways in wheelchairs.
But fifty-sixty years ago, these suntanned boys
swaggered and waggered who could lay more shingles,
carry more two by fours, who walk the wall, defying gravity.

Now old, the fellows walk a narrow path and strain
to see the rooftops they once slid down into hay piles,
spooking the horses they'd follow back to town
to return again at sunrise, seeing their accomplishment for miles.

Old houses, their fate a rocky grave or a funeral pyre,
they and the old men may lean and grey, fade and crumble.
I hope the old men reach in their memories for bottles of beer
still as cold in streams as ever, their sweaty arms gilded in sawdust.

Third Place

Mountain Time
by James McEnteer

When completed the world's largest sculpture will be that of Crazy Horse, begun June 3, 1948. It will require the removal of 5,500,000 tons of stone and is the life work of one man, Korczak Ziolkowski. Korczak died in 1982, but his children continue the work on Crazy Horse Mountain.

3/21/52 cloudy, mild Korczak steers by the stars
 cold noses of dogs
 grass-stained knees
 vacant lots
 full of hours

 kodak flashburns

 fireflies in bottles
 something strange lives
 in the closet at night the ghost of Crazy Horse

7/4/65 hot, humid Korczak keeps his course
 meeting old faces
 for the first time
 smells of prosciutto
 and garlic in the hall
 phone booth robberies
 scandalous rumors
 sauterne in the park
 the sounds of traffic dynamite like distant drums

12/24/76 heavy blizzard Korczak runs with the wind
 liberated women
 zazen in the laundromat
 upanishads
 and midnight movies

vacant rooms
full of incense
dress rehearsals
and drownings

the mountain takes a direction

9/28/82 Indian summer Korczak heels homeward

tools sharpened
the stove well fed
underground passengers
get off at our stop
gift exchanges
mercy killings

mice gnaw the moon
certain things come clear

the gaze of Crazy Horse

11/11/17 the world on fire Korczak hovers in the hills

small bicycles
in the driveway
fireflies in bottles
grass-stained knees
children must learn
to doubt the leaders

think for yourself
or die in captivity

the legacy of Crazy Horse

a stone age
in which to wonder
who thought of it first

Crazy Horse
Korczak
or the mountain