

## Yonder the Yinder

Carl Sandburg

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ONE MORNING the Potato Face Blind Man was talking different kinds of talk with the two girls, Morningstar and Moongold.

He told them about the ten bag thieves who had stolen bags and didn't know what to put in the bags.

He told them about two men who stole a horse and afterward stole haystacks of hay to feed the horse.

He told them about a man who stole a front door, traded it for a back door, and used the back door for a window because he already had a back door.

He told them about the thief who stole a hunk of coal, traded it for a hunk of ice, and the ice melted and he didn't have any more than he did before he stole the coal.

He told about the five thieves who stole smoke and tried to sell the smoke but couldn't and then all said to each other, "Let's stop stealing smoke if we can't sell it."

Then he turned his face towards the sky and made signs with his fingers like a fish swimming, like a duck ducking under water, like a goose walking first on one foot and then another, like a rag picker picking rages, like two rag pickers picking autumn leaves and saying, "Leaf by leaf the leaves are falling."

Then he told the girls, "One of the five smoke thieves came past here this morning and gave me a *yodo* to keep for him. I give it to you to keep for me."

He told them more, "The smoke thief said this is the last *yodo* in the world. So take care of it. You can walk and walk as far as you can walk, ride and ride as far as you can ride, then you can eat and sleep and get a long rest and start walking and riding again as far as you can walk and ride. But you'll never find another *yodo*. This is the last *yodo*. That's what the smoke thief said, after telling me that all five of the smoke thieves have quite stealing smoke because they can't sell it."

Then Morningstar and Moongold started for home and when they reached home they saw sitting on the front steps a long spike of a boy with a burning bean for a head, and his eyes full of spears, spads and spitches.

First he sneers at them. Then he leers. Then he jeers. And the burning bean burns all the more as he sneers, leers and jeers.

The girls ask him, "Who are you?" He answers, "I am Yonder the Yinder, sometimes called Yonder the Yinder the Yoo."

Then they make up questions to ask him. And he makes up answers. But he makes up the answers so fast they hardly know what he is answering. Sometimes his answers come so fast the girls are mixed up and befuddled and bamboozled. This is the way they talked back and forth, shooting their questions and answers:

"Where do you come from?" "Yesterday."

"Where are you going?" "Tomorrow."

"Is that so?" "Yes, quite such, and a cup of coffee, immediately, if not sooner."

"Who said you could?" "I took it."

"What did you do with it?" "I lost it."

"Who got it back for you?" "Fire and air?"

"Did you forget anything?" "Yes, mud, I am a hunk of mud and six pails of water."

"And how many animals?" "Dozens and dozens, millions and millions."

"How could you think so?" "I bought it."

"Where did you get the money?" "The money was fixed."

"Why do you always shadow us?" "I am a peanut, a proud, peculiar peanut."

"Are you going to sit here all night on our front steps?" "Tonight, tomorrow night, the next night and the next and after that to the end of the world."

And because Yonder and Yinder's answers were so cold and so peculiar, the two girls Morningstar and Moon gold began shivering. The more he talked the more they shivered. They ran into the house shivering.

They put a frying pan on the stove, broke eggs into the pan, and were watching the pan of eggs frying when they saw the kitchen lighting up with spear, spads and spitches of light.

They turned to look and there was Yonder and Yinder with a burning bean for a head, sneering, leering, jeering.

He stepped up to the stove and said to the eggs in the pan, "Hello, eggs."

Then he went on, speaking to the eggs, "How do you do, eggs? And how does it feel to get out of your egg shell?"

And he goes on, "Do you know, eggs, I used to be an egg, and when I was an egg I was the Egg of Eggs?"

By this time Morningstar and Moongold were shivering again, and they asked, "Who let you in?"

He said, "I told you I was a peanut, my father was a proud, peculiar peanut long before me. And because he was an egg I was an egg. And I am like him because he was a long spike and he had a burning bean for a head and his eyes were full of spears, spads and spitches. When you asked me who I am I told you I am Yonder the Yinder sometimes called Yonder the Yinder the Yoo."

Then he told them, "I have come to take that *yodo* the Potato Face Blind Man gave you. I heard him say the smoke thief said it is the last *yodo* in the world. If anything is the last of anything I want it and nobody can stop me from taking it."

He snatched the *yodo* and was gone and they couldn't tell whether he had gone through a window, through a door or a keyhole in the door, or whether he slid under the door.

While the eggs were frying the girls were crying. They went to bed feeling bad, they woke up feeling bad, because they remembered what the smoke thief had told the Potato Face Blind Man. They could walk and walk, ride and ride, as far as they could walk and ride, to the ends of the world, and they could eat and sleep and get rested and walk and ride again to the ends of the world, and they would never find another *yodo* because there was only one *yodo* in the whole world. And now Yonder the Yinder was gone and the *yodo* gone with him.

In the morning the girls put a frying pan on the stove, broke eggs in the pan, and were watching the pan of eggs frying, when they saw the kitchen lighting up with spears, spads and spitched of light.

They turned to look and there was Yonder the Yinder with a burning bean for a head, leering, sneering and jeering.

He told them, "Here is a *yodo*, and here is another and another and another," till he counted five *yodos*. He told them, "Every one of those five smoke thieves had a *yodo*. Why do I want a *yodo* if every sneaking, slinking smoke thief has a *yodo*?"

Then he spoke to the eggs in the pan, "Goodby, eggs, farewell, eggs, au revoir and auf wiedersehen, adios and over-the-river, eggs," and was gone, and they didn't know whether he was gone through a window, through a door, or a keyhole in the door, or whether he slid under the door.

And Morningstar and Moongold hugged each other because they were glad. And that morning as they were frying they were not crying.

And when that morning they gave the Potato Face Blind Man the five *yodos*, he said, "That is the last time I will believe what a smoke thief tells me. I won't even believe they have stopped stealing smoke because they can't sell the smoke."

The girls were asking, "What does a *yodo* do? What can we do with a *yodo*?"

The old man turned his face toward the sky and made signs with his fingers like a fish swimming, like a duck ducking under water, like a goose walking first on one foot and then on the other, like a rag picker picking rags, like two rag pickers picking autumn leaves and saying, "Leaf by leaf the leaves are falling."

Then he said, "*If you have a yodo you can look better while you listen, and listen better while you look. But if you haven't got a yodo you can't.*"

"Oh," said Morningstar. "Oh," said Moongold. And they started home and when they got home, there sitting on the front steps, was Yonder the Yinder, sometimes called Yonder the Yinder the Yoo. But they walked right past him and refused to speak.

And he sits there and begins to laugh—with a burning bean for a head. And the more he laughs the more the burning bean burns. First it burns red, then blue, then back to red. And sometimes as it changes slowly back from blue to red, he says, "If you have a *yodo* you can look better while you listen, and listen better while you look. But if you haven't got a *yodo* you can't."