

1978

Under the Scrub Oak, a Red Shoe

Dave Smith

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Smith, Dave. "Under the Scrub Oak, a Red Shoe." *The Iowa Review* 9.2 (1978): 76-77. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.2347>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.

Under the Scrub Oak, a Red Shoe · *Dave Smith*

Wrapped in a twisted brown stocking, strangled in the rolled nylon of our grandmothers, it was wedged at the heart of what little cool shade ever accumulated there. You would have to walk out of your way, back along an arroyo twisting and empty as memory, back from the road out of town so far the sky itself signals another world. To find it you do that

though, in any case, you are simply walking and it appears, something red shining through the gray-green glaze of stunted limbs. If you are looking for a lost child, your steps deliberate and quick, you might see it. Otherwise you will go on. That is what we do. But it waits to reveal itself, like an eye in the darkness, and you may innocently look into that

moment, and may imagine why it lacks the slender heel which must, once, have nailed many boys against a wall where she walked. I kneel and pick it up as you would, hearing though it is noon the moony insects cry around her, hearing also the nylon flake like pieces of skin against my skin,

feeling the sound of its passage from her shaven calf, a screech like the hawk's when he is distant and not hungry. In this arroyo no one could have seen her stop, not as drunk as she pretended, sitting long and, in time, methodically undressing, beyond thinking now, placing her bundled shoe with care. She must have been small and would have borne the usual

bruises, so we would have had no fear of any we might add, earlier, when we stood smoking by the wall, cat-calling lightly. It would have been one of those nights the breath aches it is so pleased with itself, then she appeared in that red like the first cactus buds, something clearly wrong with her but that, by God, no concern of any red-blooded buck she might want. In the junk car someone squealed, some rose and fell. There were no names. I did not mean

whatever I said, but said it because she was so small, she
could not hide her fear and shivered on her back.
Such moments we tell ourselves to walk away from,
and we do, as now I have walked in my hoping
for absence, but here is no absence, only
what waits, like this shoe, to reach, to say please
as best it can for whoever comes along, as if forgiveness
were what it meant, and love, as if any weather
that red shining endured was the bruise
you might have kissed and might not yet refuse.