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## The Woodcutter

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STEVE KATONA

**THE WOODCUTTER**

old monk of country ways  
 bearded in overalls  
 bullshit & wisdom  
 we took the deuce & a half  
 up the mountain  
 to cut firewood

ponderosa pine began at  
 about eight thousand feet  
 scrub oak but  
 standing pinon  
 we were after

the four wheel drive  
 cut into the caliche  
 rocks of the forestry road

up up the old truck climbd  
 behind us the whole  
 of northern New Mexico spread  
 gilded mesas  
 rio grande valley  
 green line headed north south  
 rio puerco meets it  
 sangre de cristos jemez mountains  
 tippd with first winter snow

“quite a saw you got there”  
 a brand new homelite  
 small but I cd cut twice as fast as he  
 with the ancient hypochondriac  
 mcculloch

his son bounced in the back  
 tried to hold down the two saws  
 the gas cans the axes  
 smiled bright sixteen year old smile  
 “cant keep that boy in school  
 when I go up on this mountain”  
 I tried to roll a smoke  
 too bumpy

low range now first gear  
following the forestry fence  
"if the rangers catch us  
tell em we're cutting on the land grant"  
he hollerd  
above the groan of the truck  
laughing thru his grey streakd beard  
"never did bother to get a wood permit  
did you?"

in the middle  
of one of the longest pulls  
the truck sputterd died  
he jerkd the emergency hollerd

"set a rock behind those tires  
what the hell's wrong now"

six miles down  
I thot  
as he began to fool  
with the truck  
the wind cold  
standing at nine thousand feet  
the side of a mountain  
high

but in thirty minutes  
with pliers crescent wrench  
a piece of copper wire  
he rebuilt the fuel pump  
kickd her over  
and we're at the top

"no one ever told me I cdnt fix anything"  
he chuckld  
"never knew any better"

saws roar axes crash  
and the boy  
drags pole wood to the road  
we're cutting a good stand of tall  
heavy pine

only moving a few feet  
from tree to tree  
only stopping to refill the saws  
with gas and oil

he workd with his head down  
whistling  
trees fall are trimmd  
cut to length in the road  
loaded two cords in four hours

his boy ran all the way down  
met us at the bottom

we hit the hiway  
and passd a man riding a horse  
all deckd out in cowboy hat  
new levis five hundred dollar saddle

"sells washing machines at monkey wards"  
he sd spitting  
onto the twilight road