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Campo Santo

Spud Johnson

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Campo Santo*By* SPUD JOHNSON

She could not pass the row of narrow graves
Along the fence (although the path there saves
Many a step between the house and town),
Because, beside the others in the ground
Under the trees, the boy who loved her lay.
And so she went around the farthest way.

She could not pass, yet why, she did not know:
She had not loved him, though he loved her so
That now she could not see a flight of birds
Without remembering his broken words.
What was he to her? Why should he lie
With arms stretched up to her as she passed by?
His fingers seemed to ache there in the clay
And lift, moving the clods a little way
In a gesture of desire as she passed near.
They seemed to touch her with unearthly fear.

It was a magic laid upon her head
By slender, boyish hands that now were dead,
Turning her steps, reluctant, to the spot.
She opened the gate into the sacred lot,
Knelt down upon the earth that was above him
And came at last, but now too late, to love him.

The paper flowers that hung against the cross
And made a crimson stain upon the moss,
Were crumpled on her face and in her hand
As tears fell down and wet the yellow sand.