

The Wrong Place To Dig

DANGER: HIGH VOLTAGE on the tablet's face,
and there's my Jake now sprinting toward a hole
beneath it. Once he's found something to chase,
he's loath to leave it. Chipmunk, rabbit, vole,
even a fly — when Jake is on patrol
best keep your head up. He is a rat terrier,
a breed whose role in life is pest control.
I hope to heaven there's some kind of barrier
between his teeth and current. Jake should have been warier.

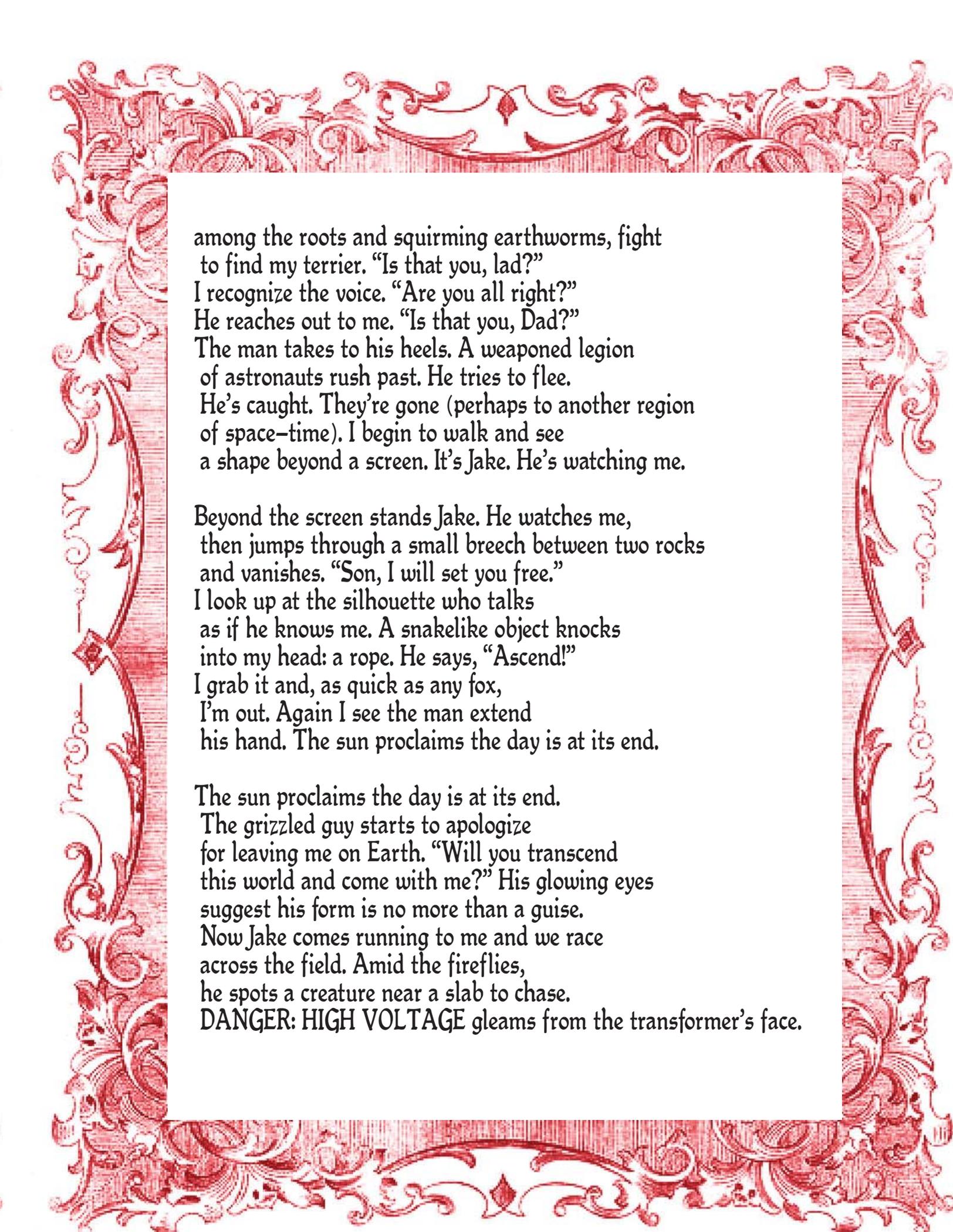
Between his teeth, the current, and the warier
rodents, a pair of living wires whip
like springs up from a crevice. Even hairier
than otters, flicking tongues of fire, they grip
his throat and try to throttle him. I whip
and whip them with the leash, struggle to pry
my dog away but, as the trio slip
beneath the slab, another grabs my thigh.
I'm in a corridor. Although it's mid-July,

this corridor's far colder than July.

The snakes have disappeared, along with Jake.
I'm hopeful the transformer's power supply
will switch on my alarm and I'll awake.

A hissing voice causes my limbs to quake:
"You and your dog will never reunite."

The voice is deafening enough to make
my eardrums ring. Though barely enough light
to sidestep roots and squirming earthworms, I will fight



among the roots and squirming earthworms, fight
to find my terrier. "Is that you, lad?"
I recognize the voice. "Are you all right?"
He reaches out to me. "Is that you, Dad?"
The man takes to his heels. A weaponed legion
of astronauts rush past. He tries to flee.
He's caught. They're gone (perhaps to another region
of space-time). I begin to walk and see
a shape beyond a screen. It's Jake. He's watching me.

Beyond the screen stands Jake. He watches me,
then jumps through a small breach between two rocks
and vanishes. "Son, I will set you free."
I look up at the silhouette who talks
as if he knows me. A snakelike object knocks
into my head: a rope. He says, "Ascend!"
I grab it and, as quick as any fox,
I'm out. Again I see the man extend
his hand. The sun proclaims the day is at its end.

The sun proclaims the day is at its end.
The grizzled guy starts to apologize
for leaving me on Earth. "Will you transcend
this world and come with me?" His glowing eyes
suggest his form is no more than a guise.
Now Jake comes running to me and we race
across the field. Amid the fireflies,
he spots a creature near a slab to chase.
DANGER: HIGH VOLTAGE gleams from the transformer's face.