

1991

Alone Over The Trees

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Recommended Citation

Stoddard, John (1991) "Alone Over The Trees," *Exile*: Vol. 37 : No. 2 , Article 25.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile/vol37/iss2/25>

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Alone over the Trees

We sat in a surplus septic tank
buried in the floor of a soybean field,
covered with boards and brown corn stalks,
and waited for geese to pitch
into our decoys.

I sat on my hands with my gun between
my knees and listened to the guide talk.
"Geese stay with the same mate
for life." he said
as he rubbed his bare hands
that he held close to his camouflaged chest
under the pair of wooden calls
that dangled from his neck.
I watched my dad blow
the heat from the coffee
in the Thermos cup,
take a sip, and close his eyes to rest
and thought about him
thinking about my mother
trying to sleep alone
in a full size bed.
And in the grey light of that blind,
with his eyes closed, and his head back,
I wondered who he was.

Six geese set their wings to land.
We pushed the top open,
emptied our guns,
and when their screaming stopped
we climbed out of the ground
into the light, and separated
to pick up the five bodies
in the field.

I heard my dad shoot
a cripple as I watched
the one we missed fly
alone over the trees.

John Stoddard