

Whoami

by Bill Yarrow

I am running around the perimeter of a collective farm at dawn. In the distance is a mountain made pink by a faint sun shining wanly on its highest snow. Four guards in four watchtowers search the surrounding terrain for attempted terrorists. This is my daily exercise, which I hope to complete before I engage in my daily chores: milking the cows, feeding the chickens, scrubbing the dining hall, policing the yard for trash. I see the sculptor emerge from his hut with his tools. A woman with fallen breasts is attempting to hang her laundry on a string. Two tall men mount horses and ride them into the meadow. A squad of children wrap themselves around a playground. The sentence of Proust I memorized last night before going to bed has fled my memory. I remember only the first word: "I." One of the elders signals to me to stop running; I am needed in the dining hall. A part of the ceiling near the pantry has come down. It will take six of us to push it firmly back into place. As I walk toward my task, I smell the heliotrope on the pubescent necks of the adolescent nannies assembled like Biblical wives circling the community well.

