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Margie Snowden North

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When Cousins Came

By Margie Snowden North

Cousins coming means
Hide and Seek in the dark,
Red Rover and Black Sheep Scatter,
making campfires

with the wood smoke burning our eyes
as it curls its way into a moonlit sky.
We feed the flames with shinnery twigs
and tell stories about ghosts
until we hear one
out there in the chicken house.
It's getting late.

Papa and Mama and Aunt and Uncle
are playing forty-two in the house
and boiling fudge on the kerosene stove
and drinking coffee.

We'd better go in.
That fudge should be done by now.
Inside, we yawn and eat fudge and
laugh and brag about that ghost

We could have made short work of him if
we'd wanted to.
But it was getting late
and we had to come in.

It'd be good to go back
to the time when cousins came.
But some are with the government now,
some are into computers and
one is an engineer
(but not the kind that wears a striped cap)
and one has all those chickens in Arkansas.
And all us Snowdens
are just as scattered from here to there
being farmers and ranchers
and preachers and writers
and the like.
And it's getting late.
Too late to go back. *

Design by Matt Heckman