

## WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF FLETCHERS

I visited the little boy  
at the edge of the woods.  
It's still not clear to me  
where he really lives.  
He'd live with animals  
if they'd take him in,  
and there would never be  
a need to speak. "Who knows,  
when you grow up you may be  
President," I said, trying  
to break the spell.  
He flinched as though struck.  
"Perhaps something in the field  
of numismatics," I continued,  
"would be less stressful.  
A correspondence school course.  
No need to leave the home,  
no wretched professor thwacking  
your knuckles. In no time  
you could hang out your shingle—  
STAMPS AND COINS. No more than  
one customer per week,  
I feel fairly certain: some nerd  
who can barely talk—  
I'm certainly not speaking of  
yourself here—browsing  
the liberty dimes and Indian head  
pennies, if you see what I mean."  
I had meant to comfort him,  
but the feral child was now  
mewling, and this annoyed me.  
"I doubt you have what it takes—  
discipline, fastidiousness,  
honesty, devotion—to serve  
a manservant, a butler,  
to a gentleman of rank and  
high-calling. No, I'm afraid  
no amount of training

could instill those virtues  
into one such as you.”  
I paused to let the acid burn.  
The doe-eyed lad wiped his nose  
on his tee-shirt and peeked over  
his shoulder into the woods  
which seemed to beckon him.  
A breeze rustled the leaves  
above our heads, and the boy swayed.  
A pileated woodpecker tapped  
some Morse code into a dead oak tree.  
At last, the boy said, “You regret  
Everything, I bet. You came here  
With a crude notion of righting  
all that was wrong with your own  
bitter childhood, but you have become  
your own father—cruel, taunting—  
who had become his father, and so on.  
It’s such a common story.  
I wish I could say to you:  
‘You’d make a fine shepherd,’  
but you wouldn’t. Your tireless needs  
would consume you the first night.”  
And, with that, the boy stepped forward  
and kissed me on the cheek.

*For some reason, this poem reminds me of the Bob Dylan lyric “It ain’t no use a-talking to me//  
It’s just the same as talking to you.” Maybe we are all just talking to ourselves and what we  
really need is a kiss.*

- Jerry Wemple