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The Age of Wonders

John Sterling Harris

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The Age of Wonders

In those days there were marvels and I saw them:
 The lombardy poplars along the street
 That were even-spaced and all the same size;
 The hollyhocks that made into ladies in petal gowns;
 The six-sided tiles in the barbershop floor
 That lay in straight rows in every direction;
 The horse-drawn wagons of gravel that dumped
 By turning the floor boards on edge
 So the gravel sifted through;
 Sam Lee, the blacksmith, who could shape
 Red iron on an anvil with a hammer;
 The seeds in apricot pits that tasted like almonds;
 And baby rabbits were born without hair.

A horse could scratch his back by rolling over
 And show he was old enough to ride;
 Pine boards had a grain and could be split
 Along their length but not across;
 A dog's nose was cold, a cow's nose wet,
 And a horse's nose was velvet;
 Wood shavings curled as they came from the plane;
 A bicycle rim without its spokes lost all its strength;
 Frost patterns on windows grew like fern leaves;
 And I could bend a bar of plumber's lead
 With my bare hands;
 The striders that skated on the water
 Sank when I added soap;
 Bert Weight could scribe a line
 Across a piece of glass
 Then break it absolutely straight;
 And old Erb Matson could whistle two notes at once.

And thus I learned how the world was made
 In forms and laws, results and beauty
 From what the wonders were.

—John Sterling Harris