window open. The sprinklers in the pasture seem particularly loud. It sounds like fifty of them out there pumping in circles, like guns firing water. Rain Birds spray slowly in one direction and then chut-chut-chut fast coming back. Basil’s window must be open too. I hear coughing. I think about the moles in the pasture being soaked with the sprinklers.

Our moles dig many tunnels and leave mounds of dirt by the openings. A couple of times the neighbor kids came over and we ran a garden hose into a few of the openings. Dad gave us all pointed shovels. We stood by the mole holes waiting for them to come out so we could kill them and they wouldn’t ruin the pasture. We got a few. It seemed like an awful lot of time to spend for a couple of old moles. There were always more.

I think about the moles now, under the wet ground, with the Rain Birds chut-chut-chutting over their heads. I think about Basil’s lungs and imagine thousands of tunnels going every which way through them and the slime that does not totally go away, ever. I imagine him grown-up, piloting a plane for my airline, which would have both passenger planes and crop dusters. Basil will make an excellent pilot. Basil’s plane will be custom-painted, blue and red (of course). It will have a special compartment for the pounder, and before he takes off, his dog (he should always have a dog) can come say good-bye, if he feels like it. Mom and Dad and Grandfather can fly as often as they want to. I will see to this.

In a Greenhouse

David Wagoner

Nurserymen tell us trees
grown under glass
in the calm of a greenhouse
are spindlier, their trunks
more modest, more inclined
to bend under the burdens
of new branches and leaves,
their ordinarily haphazard
outgrowth unbalanced
in the direction of sunlight
exclusively, taking no part
in the play of weather
outside the windows. Inside,
trees that have grown accustomed
to constant temperature
and easygoing air
become much less sturdy
than wild ones subjected
to sudden changes, surprises
of much too much, too little
or too late. Yet their caretakers
behind glass have discovered
if they hold the privileged ones
in hand and shake them,
shake them, even pound them
with padded mallets, they straighten,
stiffen, and grow tall.