

Ode to Autumn Glen And The Villages

by Sara Crandell Hoxie

Before Autumn Glen and The Villages
there was a forest with owls
that burrowed in the old soil,
Where pools of shooting stars
laced perfect in February's damp.

Fat lizards there
slumbered summer in its shade.
Cover for sparrow and finch,
Towhees over-wintered
in brush sustained by grace.

That's all changed now.
Bulldozers removed these
in the midst of the
nesting spring.

It took a few days.
A chipper ate whole trees
belching piles of damp powder
that smelled of banished ghosts.
Water was given no honor.

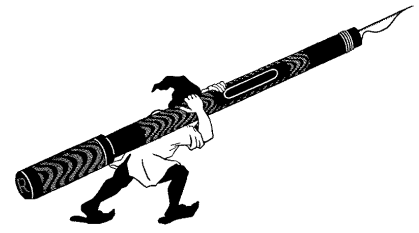
The earth lay stripped and silent.
A cycle of ten thousand years
broken forever.
Now the rows of sterile houses stand,
plastic radishes in red dirt.

Neo human habitat now
where the oak forest
last seen in March,
was gone by April.
Not even the elevation remained.

I saw a dead rabbit on the street
and five quail
standing confused and homeless
in the dust.

A man's mind fueled by money
has more power
than God.

the Poet's Pen



Shepherd

by Patricia Wellingham-Jones

I'll bet that no one knows,
in those concrete-slab houses
sprung up in a field where last year
pheasants croaked and lambs frolicked
and quail built nests in blackberry thickets,

I'll bet they don't know
that the beat-up four wheel drive pickup
swinging around the corner at dusk
contains a Basque.

Fifty years ago, he clambered
off a train in Marysville to a sack lunch,
two dogs and a staff to herd a flock
of resistant sheep up to a mountain meadow
where the nightly threat was coyote.
He spoke a thorny tongue only the animals
understood.

Two generations later, wearing the same
crooked hat, or one just like it, he tends
the cattle of wealthy men. I wonder
what the old shepherd thinks when he gazes
at land that swallowed his sweat,
where his lambs have scattered and gone
and the threat is now two-legged predators
armed with money.

Bitter Poem

by Stephani Schaefer

This grandmother in a black shawl
looks down at the rubble she sits on,
cast down in bitterness.

If she were to look up, she would not
want me, *American* as witness. She'd
want someone who could understand.

Her death will be bitter...*bitter*,

because men intent on retribution
will plan and carry out the
manner and the time of her dying:

one of the acceptable casualties.

The bitter death, the death
that tastes like bile, is the death
we accept for others.

This boy, rock in hand:
*his death is in his face: immanent,
accepted.*

He looks out of himself at me,
in this David and Goliath moment,
hefts the rock, gauges the distance:

his gaze puts me on an armored tank,
a place I don't want to be.

When this encounter
doesn't save his brothers or his home,
he may take that next step,

when the rock becomes a bomb
strapped under the shirt,

*when he goes down
with those he takes down with him.*

Yes, that is a bitter death,
conceived in bitterness:
one big bite taken in defiance

from the bitter apple of death.

Dawn Walk

by Patricia Wellingham-Jones

I walk the country road
beside an irrigation ditch hidden
by fat gold cups of evening primrose,
the flat yellow faces of mullein.

At my footsteps
frogs plop into the water
like a well-trained chorus line.

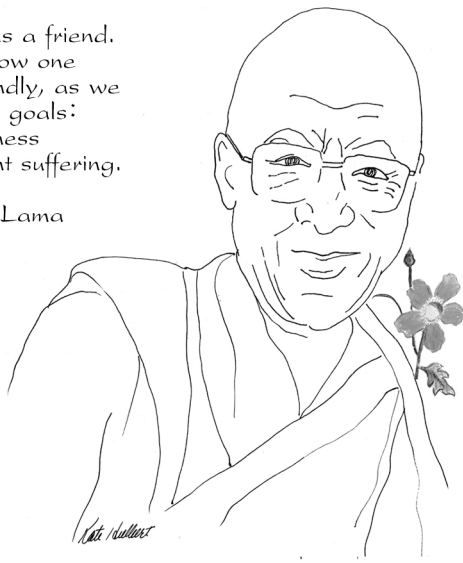
In the mowed field beyond the ditch
a covey of quail races toward shelter,
the parents of five killdeer
who have flown pipe their distress.

Down the road chicory
thrusts blue petals against horse knees.
The rancher on his four-wheeler waves,
makes sure water runs where it should.

I hear my Nikes crunch on gravel,
watch birds fly away, squirrels run up a tree,
wonder what else I disturb
in my quiet wander.

I accept you as a friend.
We already know one
another profoundly, as we
share the same goals:
we seek happiness
and do not want suffering.

— Dalai Lama



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