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## Harvest

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# Harvest

*Bill Elgersma*

Fall day, hint of chill  
in the air.

Wind blows frosty air,  
shipped from the north  
redistributed here.  
Along the way cattle confinements,  
slaughter houses attach  
and so  
this is a wind of many cultures.

Somewhere a neighbor could not wait,  
the wet wood of his smoky stove  
taints the air,  
over-ripe melons in the corner of a garden  
find their way in,  
combined with the last mowing  
of an industrious young couple  
determined to have a show lawn  
on a starter home.

Not only smell  
the burned wind bears sound of its labor.  
—dried corn leaves or husk for that matter,  
stripped naked by machines  
indifferent to all but its yellow gold  
scrape across roads and driveways and sidewalks  
—bean pods rattle as they shiver in these  
dipped temperatures waiting only for  
warmer store houses.  
—trains—grain, coal, and lumber  
evidence of a coming season  
labor on the wind  
The whistle groans going north and barks coming down—

In all of this,  
from that first phone call in June  
until the last field was cleared  
I watched you work, oh Lord.  
We plant the seed  
you make it grow and bear fruit  
and then you harvest.  
And now Jeanie's mom  
to harvest.

The chill on the wind  
causes a different kind of shiver.

We wait while she continues to shrivel,  
the cancer taking the best parts first  
and now  
content  
to nibble  
at what is left.

But, Lord, you harvest,  
ignoring chaff and stock,  
leaves and pods,  
—taking only that of value  
to your store house.

And in that knowledge  
we continue to plant  
and tend.  
We too grow  
and you continue to harvest.

One day Lord,  
when the wind comes calling  
—the beans have lost their summer clothes  
—the ears of corn have nodded off

grant that I might be ripe,  
fitting for you grainery  
waiting to hear the sound of you gleaning

and find my home in your storehouse too.