

“Goodbye, Summer”
Glenn McCarty

On your way out the door,
you tracked dirt across the
freshly-mopped kitchen floor,
threw open the refrigerator,
popped some blueberries in your mouth,
guzzled lemonade from the pitcher,
and raided the freezer for one last fudgsicle.

You left the yard littered with our toys:
plastic lawnmower, water gun,
wooden sword, eye patch,
bike helmet, soccer ball.
In the sandbox, my steamroller
lies where you buried it,
its dinosaur driver
still at the controls,
the road-half finished
in its path.
Mom said to clean them up last week.
You winked and said Don't worry,
there's time to play tomorrow.

Tomorrow.

Throughout the cloudless days of green July,
you whispered the word
in my waking ear
like a spell to summon morning.
Sitting beside me
at the breakfast table,
you tapped your toe and hummed
as I slurped the last drops of milk.
Before I was done,
you threw open the screen door
and bolted into the backyard.

I hunted on wet knees
through the ryegrass
until I found you in the meadow,
as the chubby caterpillar
munching milkweed.
You appeared under the apple tree,
a white-tailed fawn, ears twitching

in that frozen second
before our eyes met,
and you galloped past the pines.
One steamy afternoon,
I clutched you as a fat-bodied toad
with slippery olive skin,
legs coiled to spring.
Tucking you in my pocket,
I climbed the birch-beam ladder
to the treehouse
and read you stories
of the silly old bear,
the mole and the toad,
and the boy wizard,
as the supper call
rang like a distant bell.
Only then did I set you free,
and you hopped away
into the space
between the peonies
and the rhubarb plant,
beyond the picket fence,
where the grass
grows wild.

I rode the back of August
like an iridescent bubble,
marking time in the
coo of mourning doves,
the cicada buzz,
and the lullaby of crickets
sawing their gentle
one-two,
one-two.
Last night I drowsed
with the smoke of campfire
on my hair,
cheeks smeared with chocolate,
eyes thick with sleep,
nose full of the smell
of fresh-mowed grass,
chlorine and sunscreen.

Tomorrow I will awaken
to your brother Fall's whispers:
Come away

*To a fresh adventure
sharpened pencils,
lunch boxes,
sandwiches and milk,
books yet unopened,
and friends unmet.*

A part of me is scared to think
of all the changes which await
in this new season,
but
until you return
next year,
I say
farewell, friend,
and thank you
for stopping here.