

# TAKE HEART

## A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,  
Maine Poet Laureate*

Kenneth Rosen of Portland has published numerous collections of poetry, including *The Origins of Tragedy*, which includes “The Alligator’s Hum.” The poem brings together alligators, dating and poetry in a combination that makes us rethink all three.

### The Alligator’s Hum

*by Kenneth Rosen*

To allure an alligator lady so she’ll allow him  
To fertilize her eggs before she buries them  
In her sand nest, the male alligator  
Hums in a swamp pond like a kid in a bathtub.  
It hums like a foghorn: Hummmmmm! And raises  
Queer geysers of water by his torso’s profound  
Vibrations, these inverted, fragile, almost crystal  
Chandeliers his obligatto of amor. I have tried this  
On dates without knowing what I was doing:  
Hummmmmm! My date pretended she didn’t know  
What I was doing either and would ask,  
“Are you all right?” Hmmmmmm! I’d echo,

Something below my solar plexus now governing  
My lowest, reptilian, ganglion brain. But I swear,  
Like people who claim they can’t understand poetry,  
She knew what it meant for the hum of the body  
To dominate mind, It meant please admire  
My wet inverted chandeliers, which translates  
Like all poetry too, into alligator: You can get me,  
If you let me, you grinning, beautiful  
primordial swampwater creature you!” Then their tails  
Slap the water with a belly whomp.  
They thrash like mad, almost invincible—though the human  
Eye is never naked—and then it’s over.

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