

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

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

In today's column Sheila Gray Jordan, of Chebeague Island, describes the unique skill by which a man who likes cows manages to coax them to the fence. She identifies him only in the last stanza, where her poem becomes a love poem.

The Man Who Likes Cows

by Sheila Gray Jordan

Thirty miles from the city,
past the first town
with a small name,
cows are in a field,
black and white Holsteins,
nudes with dairy nipples.

He stops the car,
opens the door on my side,
and I get out to see the cows
who look at us over their shoulders—
sloppy, dumb broads, wading
in milk and honeybees.

He is a man who likes cows.
But they are not to be coaxed,
cud-happy this spring day,
the grass green.
Something big—a bell or a sunset—
is necessary to move them.

Like Jove, "Speaking
their tongue..." in his city suit,
he cups his hands: the Moo
rising from his groin,
a brazen klaxon,
helloing.

The call bends their thick skulls.
They lift their heads—
all eyes and ears—
coming on to crowd the fence.
I take his hand, make a fist of it
with its gold ring.

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