

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

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

How does a poet track and catch a poem? In today's column, award-winning poet Robert Siegel of South Berwick explains, offering up in the process the lovely poem he caught.

How to Catch a Poem

by Robert Siegel

It begins with one leaf rubbing against another,
a light, a rift in a cloud, the weight of a feather
spiraling down, a ripple on the water—

its shape rising from the dark and fusing
with a sound, a touch, a peculiar scent. Now it begins
to show plumage, the gleam of a pelt, pausing

to stare with an ebony eye. One twitch—it's gone,
fled into that darker wood behind the eyes. Stunned,
you trace its tracks on paper, stumble,

pick yourself up and go down each sly
cheat of a path vanishing in a thicket, lie
still, listening for its breath, a twig breaking

where you think....Avoid sleep, follow all day,
at night listen for its cry under the moon. Finally you may
gather enough to show its presence. Delay

finishing what you have. Take your time. Return home
and frame the cast of its footprint: that is the poem.

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