

# TAKE HEART

## A Conversation in Poetry

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

Author Grace Paley once remarked that she knew she had a story when she had two stories. In today's poem Bruce Spang, the poet laureate of Portland, tells two stories at once -- one about a dog, and the second about a marriage.

### Humane Society

*by Bruce Spang*

The neighbor's pup,  
wanting in,  
won't let up.  
Yelp. Yelp. Yelp.  
This, the fourth night  
of its desperation.

Our two cats huddle  
at the open window  
pretending to be sympathetic.  
Downstairs, the cuckoo pleads  
its shrill three-stress call.

I can remember,  
shivering in my pajamas,  
calling out, again and again,  
*Sandy, Sandy, Sandy,*  
drifting into blackness.  
*Leave it alone, My wife would intone.*  
*Let it learn.*

But it was not the dog I was calling,  
not then, when my marriage  
could be counted in the three-word  
sentences we barked between us.  
It was my wanting out, there  
on the porch in the cold,  
waiting to hear how far my voice  
could carry across night fields.

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