

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

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

In today's poem, Douglas Woodsum of Smithfield offers advice to Mainers about how to split stove wood.

Splitting Wood In Winter

by Douglas Woodsum

You'll need a barn with a big door, the old-fashioned kind that hangs on wheels, slides open down a track. You'll need a bare bulb, the sun having sunk before your return from work. You'll need a splitting maul (the ax always gets stuck), a medieval weapon perfect for pillaging heat from the heart of hardwood. You can plug in the portable radio or just listen to the hush of the swing, then thwack...or thoonk, the soft clinks or cloonks of the splits falling from the chopping block onto the old, thick, scarred floorboards of the barn. You'll need your hands to rip apart pieces still connected by strips of unsplit wood. You'll need to load the canvas carrier thrice, enough to survive the dead of night. You won't need reminding, "Splitting wood warms you twice: once chopping it, once burning it." You'll smile walking through the cold, back to the house, your hot breath a harbinger of wood smoke.

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