

# TAKE HEART

## A Conversation in Poetry

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

Today Elizabeth Tibbetts of Hope writes of a character well known to those who pass him by in their cars. Yet he remains mysterious.

### The Saint of Returnables

*by Elizabeth Tibbetts*

Our saint of returnables is back, riding, slow mile after mile, along the spring roadside, baskets strapped to his old bike, plastic bags hung from the handlebars. His gaze averts to the ditch as he watches for what glitters, each bottle and can he picks, a nickel towards sustenance. He pedals, March through November, through good and God-awful weather, claiming what's been tossed out or lost until his bike is as packed as a mule. When he glances up we see his face full-on, a face expression has been erased from, so he looks as though he has lost his own story somewhere down the road. But what looks simple could be a twisting path that would lead to a man's heart. Not the tough muscle pumping spring air into his thighs, but that imagined space of the soul, where he stores everything, and watches and waits for what's to come. Yet we're already done, having driven fast past him—past wood frogs' muttering talk and blackbirds' red-winged flashes in alders, past swatches of witch grass and day lilies, leaves so fierce they push up green inches every day.

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