

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

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

In this week's poem Stuart Kestenbaum of Deer Isle tells a tale of adolescent desire, a moth, and a mysterious light that burns inside him.

The Light

by Stuart Kestenbaum

A Camel-smoking teenager, I have just returned
from New York City with my friend
Ellen, she of the wispy blonde
hair in her eyes and the sophisticated
laugh, when a moth dives deep
into my throat, so that I can't
talk or swallow. We are on the way
to her house, for what I pray will be
love and I can't even tell her
what has happened, I just
stand there in the mercury vapor
light on South Orange Avenue
until we part and I walk home.
The day in New York with the visits
to her genteel friends,
the Metropolitan Museum of Art,
and Art Students League and the
exotic promise of the train station
all behind us, I knew I just wanted
a girl to put in my life to make
me whole and instead I swallow
a moth, the brown and white
moth that circles endlessly around
the glow, that can burn itself on the
candle of desire. It must have been
after the light that was
inside me, the light that
even after all these years
I have not yet seen or understood.

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