

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

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

Readers of this famous poem by Edwin Arlington Robinson often remark about the figure of the miller, who is depressed because the changes of the modern world have tossed him aside. But Robinson's real focus is the miller's wife, brooding about his depression and thinking her own dark thoughts.

The Mill

by Edwin Arlington Robinson

The miller's wife had waited long,
 The tea was cold, the fire was dead;
And there might yet be nothing wrong
 In how he went and what he said:
"There are no millers any more,"
 Was all that she had heard him say;
And he had lingered at the door
 So long that it seemed yesterday.

Sick with a fear that had no form
 She knew that she was there at last;
And in the mill there was a warm
 And mealy fragrance of the past.
What else there was would only seem
 To say again what he had meant;
And what was hanging from a beam
 Would not have heeded where she went.

And if she thought it followed her,
 She may have reasoned in the dark
That one way of the few there were
 Would hide her and would leave no mark:
Black water, smooth above the weir
 Like starry velvet in the night,
Though ruffled once, would soon appear
 The same as ever to the sight.

Take Heart: A Conversation in Poetry is produced in collaboration with the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. This poem is in the public domain. Questions about submitting to *Take Heart* may be directed to Gibson Fay-LeBlanc, Special Consultant to the Maine Poet Laureate, at mainepoetlaureate@gmail.com or 207-228-8263. *Take Heart: Poems from Maine*, an anthology collecting the first two years of this column, is now available from Down East Books.