

# TAKE HEART

## A Conversation in Poetry

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

Anyone can win the Pain Sweepstakes. As Mekeel McBride of Kittery implies in today's poem, everybody does.

### The Pain Sweepstakes

*by Mekeel McBride*

is open to all, regardless of age,  
opportunity, or interest. Takes no  
effort to enroll. When you win, you  
win big and we aren't just bragging. Imagine  
your cat, flat as a cartoon in the aftermath  
of a foreign car; discover your favorite  
child feeding on the fine caviar  
of barbiturates; find your spouse in bed  
with a young student of Russian literature  
whose pink cheeks shine like the Ukrainian  
dawn. If all else fails we can crack your father's  
heart like a walnut left over from last  
Christmas, then hook him up to the white heaven  
of intensive care. We care about you.  
For once, we want you to win.  
And the really startling part is how easy  
this all is. Keep your hopes high. We draw  
your number every time you sigh at the sad  
shape this world is in.

---

*Take Heart: A Conversation in Poetry* is produced in collaboration with the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. Poem copyright ©1995 Mekeel McBride. Reprinted from *Wind of the White Dresses*, Carnegie Mellon University Press, 1995, by permission of Mekeel McBride. Questions about submitting to *Take Heart* may be directed to Gibson Fay-LeBlanc, Special Consultant to the Maine Poet Laureate, at [mainepoetlaureate@gmail.com](mailto: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.