TAKE HEART
A Conversation in Poetry

Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,
Maine Poet Laureate

This reader’s choice poem from a past column comes from Allison Williams of Alfred. She writes: “‘Sardine Packer’ is posted over my desk because it states exactly what packing sardines was like. I never did it but a friend did; her picture and obituary is posted with the poem.”

Sardine Packer
by Tom Sexton

The moon drew the bay to itself
like a lover at full tide
when I was young and full of life.
Oh, I could make my scissors dance.

Silver fish spilled from every net,
and all my days were buttery
when I worked at the cannery.
Oh, I could make my scissors dance.

My children came to see me work.
I was the fastest on the line.
They liked to slide in herring slime.
Oh, I could make my scissors dance.

The new owner won’t come to town
to watch us nip and cut and pack.
He bought and gave us all the sack.
Oh, I could make my scissors dance.

My daughter’s made her final bow.
My grandson’s crying on my knee.
But they can’t live on scenery.
Oh, I could make my scissors dance.

Summer people come here now
to walk along the quiet bay.
I had my time. I had my day.
Oh, I could make my scissors dance.

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