

# TAKE HEART

## A Conversation in Poetry

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

Sometimes the lessons children must learn are not only troublesome for them, but for the parents who must witness their learning. Today's poem is by Gary Rainford of Swans Island.

### Miss Shrew

*by Gary Rainford*

It's a chill morning in May.  
I follow Meri, whirling and speechless, to a nook  
underneath the staircase.

Trapped inside a jar  
a velvety shrew, smaller than my big toe,  
is dying, but holding to life  
like petals of roses to a cut stem.

When I palm the jar, tiny shrew feet struggle,  
then fall. And when she lifts her head,  
her red eyes close.

Meri feels so terrible we let Miss Shrew go loose  
way out back by the honeysuckle vines  
in the mice and shrew hotel  
of tall grasses.

"I want Miss Shrew to live, see another sunrise,"  
Meri points tearfully at the sky.

"Go shrew, go shrew, go," I say, down on my knees  
and elbows, praying for a twitch  
of hope, but she hardly moves.

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