

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

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

Paul Nelson, a 25-year resident of Machiasport, now lives in Hawaii, but he continues to write about his Maine experience. Here, he recalls an encounter on a winter night with a Maine moose.

Night Out

by Paul Nelson

Blank by the fire.

Coals dropped in platelets. My hands glowed,
years fused. So I got up and drove out the forest road
as if I were a star beneath the jittery stars,
swarming the mountainous sofas.

Thirty below, 2 A.M., I missed the turn beyond the bridge,
slid once around, hallucinated into a drift.
The hood popped. The engine-well filled with snow.
I hadn't been drinking but sat there
thinking how the beauty of that night would freeze in my eyes.
It was then the moose came from the trees, wading,
waving its great, palmated rack, looming above the car.
It looked in, lowered its neck, hooked the rocker panel
and with something of a moan flipped me over, out of the snow,
into the middle of the road, snorted and walked off upside down.
I sat on my neck. I couldn't see the sky,
was wondering, sorry when the headlights came,
the Atlantic Seafood truck for Portland, turning me yellow,
a yolk in a racked egg, almost running me over.
He jimmied the door. I spilled out talking.
He wouldn't believe me any more than you,
how I'd been saved, that my life had been in danger.
The tracks were gone in powder. All-State
looked at the buckled roof but would not call it
an act of God or Man, wouldn't swallow Moose.
But that big, sad face, rubber-lipped above me,
moons in my dreams.

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