

The Harvester

The child held her mother's hand
as they strolled down the one-one country road.
Fat black bumblebees buzzed
around the last wildflowers of the season
perched just beyond the road's edge.
The child ran to shoo the bumblebees and
pick the flowers, but she remembered--
that was not why she had come.
If I pick the flowers, mother
they will not grow back in the spring.

A dark shadow crossed ahead of them.
It was a chicken hawk swooping on air currents
above the honey locust trees. The girl stepped carefully
casting her glance to the cloudless sky.
I mustn't step on the hawk, mother.
I might tie him to the ground.

Thick, warm air stirred
with the afternoon breeze. Smells of the harvest
were in the air. The golden beans waved to the child
from their field and the drying cornstalks crackled
back and forth.
Daddy should remember to leave a row of crops in the field, mother.
That makes the next harvest full.

As the road forked ahead of them,
the bright child raced for the brush between the pathways.
This was why she had come.
With the precision of a wood carver
the girl picked the bittersweet. She bent each stem
carefully before pinching it off and cradling it in her arms.
The bright orange marbles caught the sunlight
filtering through the drying red and yellow leaves.
The girl told her mother when the pods popped,
small suns shedding fiery coats.
When they turned to go, the child was careful
to leave a few strands behind.
Look mother, she said.
I am the Harvester.

-Christina Smith