

Sarah Blanchard

Poetry

Snake in the Garden



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Category: Literary Arts
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Wake County Senior Games

Snake in the Garden

Pulling out weeds and pushing in bulbs,
I'm startled by a slither of glossed black muscle,
knowing I hadn't left the garden hose there
under the roses, alive and stretching in the sun.

The black snake has returned
from haunting the hens' nest boxes.
I saw him yesterday morning
coiled around a freckled brown egg,
while the hens clucked and fussed in the shadows.

I have my rose-pruning gauntlet gloves at hand.
Made of faded green canvas and stiff caramel leather,
they work equally well as armor against rose thorns and snake teeth.
The snake has never bitten me. The roses always scratch.

Gently, I lift the long heavy rope of pure snake muscle,
one hand just behind the head and the other somewhere midway.
The snake is heavy and dense, with black scales above and pale cream below.
His eyes are amber and vertical, like the eyes of a wise goat.
He is beautiful and warm from the sun.

I carry him to the bank by the creek and lower him into the leaves,
but he winds his six-foot self around my arms and shoulders—
protesting, or holding back, or perhaps holding on.