

## Almost Heaven

Our Iowa farm cradles me  
with its stoic barn,  
white farmhouse  
and family grave yard on the hill.

Swaying rows of corn  
dig into the black dirt,  
as the oat field rolls with the wind  
on the back forty.

Guernsey cows bow down  
to grind their cud in the pasture  
neatly parted by Rock Creek  
and guarded by the windmill's fan.

Chickens dance and scratch  
for a speck of left-over corn  
as Tippie our terrier tends the night  
that lights Big Dipper and Orion's belt.

But then--I behead and strip  
a young rooster for suppertime.  
Winter snow smashes our hog-house roof  
while the bull gores our neighbor.

Lightning finds five calves under the cottonwood tree  
and July hail hacks the beans and oats.  
A late frost claims the early beets,  
the corn picker maims my uncle's hand.

Our old sow eats her piglets---  
"Damn it all! Son, go get the 22."

By Arlin Buyert