

HAROLD QUINN

THE LIMIT

We lug them in bunched by a neck cord;
blind heads drop, bills agape.
Mostly mallards, a few pintail and teal, wet, tousled.
When I try to smooth the ruffled feather-bellies,
my hand is surprised by warmth, and limp response
to an empty fondle. I remember
their quick release from flight,
the arc broken to sprawl,
and blunt aftersound to the clean shot
that brought them down, and let their beauty go.

CAMPING POINT LOBOS

Sea wolves bark through darkness.
Somewhere out there, sea otters bob
belly-up in a cold flotilla of kelp.

At dawn I see rocks cut mist,
pines strain against wind,
water explode upward.

The gray circle of horizon opens
as I kindle wood, peer into skimpy flame,
plead for new fire.

A sputter flares
in the tangled grid, then dies,
lost in that glittering sea.