

*Wilderness House Literary Review 4/1*

*Ellaraine Lockie*

**Last Crop**

I want to pull this parched  
tomato plant to my breast  
Without smashing  
its single surviving progeny

Mother-milk nourish it  
Kindred soul connect  
Not because death  
is slow-dancing final steps  
up the decayed stem

But because life labors  
irrepressibly in the ripe red fruit  
Ill-fated survival struggle  
that clones my own

Feelings that crack break crush  
at the touch of a harsh word  
Once supple skin withered  
Weathered from within

Well sunk deeper  
with each midlife month  
Red fruit bearing river  
mother nature renders dry

Muzzles it at the mouth  
until the dam self-defends  
and ruptures into a flood  
A conceivable last crop

**After-Marriage Vows**

Words aren't what they say  
Proclamations of love  
can't put their tentacles around  
my shoulders

Jagged terrain, your words  
Easy to cut myself  
rolling them around  
in my memory

Too long between auditory  
love lessons  
Too many tardies  
Absences  
Low-priority return calls

Maybe a faulty answering machine  
Sloppy receptionist  
Or maybe I see exaggerations  
Optimisms  
That are lies in disguise

You a snake charmer  
coiled like the telephone cord  
you use to hypnotize me  
from other parts of the world  
A smooth talker selling ice for freezers

Your articulation is letter perfect  
Action not your faithful dog  
Words are cheap  
Follow-through requires wealth you  
don't possess

Trust drowns in your well of words  
Dependability dies a verbal death  
And I won't buy your ice either