

BOB VANCE

## On Halloween in the Bright Sun

a wind off the cold bay  
points clutches of cornstalk hags  
to a house on a hill  
where the hunter lies dying.

He is surrounded by heads.  
An Alaskan moose spreads its rack,  
over him in his hospital bed.  
His daughter, her hair tied back,  
attends to him as he bleeds.

She sets aside her inherited arrows  
to bend over him. Leukemia's guns  
make his nose run blood; the disease  
flushes each den in his vital red field, everything  
that keeps him alive must bolt.

A huge grizzly spreads out across a wall.  
Another bear, a black one, walks out of another wall,  
turns and looks too softly for a killer,  
"He looked at me just like that  
before I shot him."

There is a turkey, three bucks and a Caribou  
from Canada; a wild boar  
and a Muskellunge swimming the pine wall  
all in audience to the hunter's death

in his basement, his second choice  
place for dying, near a room full of power tools,  
nothing that will fix him now. He's given up  
the more and more frequent transfusions.  
His daughter props him up  
for pills he can only swallow crushed.

It is then he sees out the window:  
the small lake, rows  
of dried hollyhock, herds of white clouds that run  
too fast to kill. The first freeze blows in from Alberta.  
He just wanted to crawl away, find a rock

or a soft, needled bed: to lie finally  
beneath a standing web of roots. He sees  
over the many browns of the hills, the horns  
of milkweed cracked open by frost  
and the big fish that flashes

a moment above the frigid lake.