

A Certain Kind of Eden

By Kay Ryan

It seems like you could, but

you can't go back and pull

the roots and runners and replant.

It's all too deep for that.

You've overprized intention,

have mistaken any bent you're given

for control. You thought you chose

the bean and chose the soil.

You even thought you abandoned

one or two gardens. But those things

keep growing where we put them—

if we put them at all.

A certain kind of Eden holds us thrall.

Even the one vine that tendrils out alone

in time turns on its own impulse,

twisting back down its upward course

a strong and then a stronger rope,

the greenest saddest strongest

kind of hope.

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Born in California, Kay Ryan is the author of several books of poetry. Her unique brand of tightly compressed brilliance has earned her the status of one of the great living American poets, and led to her appointment as U.S. Poet Laureate in 2008. Maintaining a career outside the mainstream poetry circuit, Ryan teaches remedial English in California's Marin County, where she has lived for the last 30 years. Ryan has said that her poems do not start with imagery or sound, but rather develop "the way an oyster does, with an aggravation."