

The Bait

By Eric Chock

Saturday mornings, before
my weekly chores,
I used to sneak out of the house
and across the street,
grabbing the first grasshopper
walking in the damp California grass
along the stream.
Carefully hiding a silver hook
beneath its green wings,
I'd float it out
across the gentle ripples
towards the end of its life.
Just like that.
I'd give it the hook
and let it ride.
All I ever expected for it
was that big-mouth bass
awaiting its arrival.
I didn't think
that I was giving up one life
to get another,
that even childhood
was full of sacrifice.
I'd just take the bright green thing,
pluck it off its only stalk,
and give it away as if
it were mine to give.
I knew someone out there
would be fooled,
that someone would accept
the precious gift.
So I just sent it along
with a plea of a prayer,
hoping it would spread its wings this time
and fly across that wet glass sky,
no concern for what inspired
its life, or mine,
only instinct guiding pain
towards the other side.



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