

# 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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