September 2014

After the Rain

Linda L. Seavy
St. John Fisher College

How has open access to Fisher Digital Publications benefited you?

Follow this and additional works at: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/verbum

Part of the Religion Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/verbum/vol11/iss2/8
After the Rain

Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay’s first paragraph.

"When I was a child, I walked to school with my mother. The path we took led us through undeveloped land, over a creek, and past hedgerows. If it had rained in the night, there was a patch of wild roses that would still have large drops of water clinging to their stems, which caught the morning light and sparkled in every color of the rainbow. We called those “Angels’ Tears.”
Linda L. Seavy

After the Rain

When I was a child, I walked to school with my mother. The path we took led us through undeveloped land, over a creek, and past hedgerows. If it had rained in the night, there was a patch of wild roses that would still have large drops of water clinging to their stems, which caught the morning light and sparkled in every color of the rainbow. We called those “Angels’ Tears.”

In the afternoons I would walk back along this path by myself. My mother would wait for me at the end of the path, where it met the main road. I would always walk slowly, looking for birds and animals, and the signs of flower buds opening and small spaces in the undergrowth where animals made their way through the brush and shrubs.

Even after school was out for the summer, we loved to walk along this path. We would go out after rain showers to look for snails. We counted them – usually 100 or more of them. They were all sizes, and in so many colors: green, yellow, orange, brown, and various stripes. With their shells, they were easy to pick up, and my mother let me bring a few home in a shoebox, with some of the weeds they lived on, so I could study them more closely. I watched them gliding around, feeling their way along with antennae raised, and they would pull back into their whorled shells when they wanted to sleep. There must have been some eggs on the weeds; once I saw the tiniest yellow-shelled snail chugging around the inside of the box. It was a perfect replica of its older cousins, yet barely large enough to see without a magnifying glass. The shoebox lid, punched with air holes, was always kept on top when I was not watching the snails. I wondered if the little one would get right out of a hole and lose his way, so I took them back outside before I went to sleep that night.

My mother was a good sport about the temporary pets I brought home. I would put nail holes in the lids of glass jelly jars and bring home a beetle or two for a few days. I was fascinated by the colors glinting on the backs of Japanese beetles. I wondered where they got their resplendent shimmer of colors. I loved lady bugs the best. They came in so many different shades of red, orange, and reddish-orange, with different numbers and patterns of spots, that I could tell each one apart.

I never took June bugs home. They had such a short life that I did not want to spoil any of it for them. I would see them in mid-June, and then on the Fourth of July, we would stand under one particular tree to watch the fireworks, and the June bugs would be bumbling and bumping into us in the dark. They would all be gone soon after that.

I did not bring home everything I saw. Either I was not sure how to care for them properly, or they were a little too icky for me to pick up. Tadpoles were left in the small eddies of the creek to grow and sprout legs, but when the little toads and frogs would get out of the water and onto the path, I would pick them
up – just as I did with snails – to move them to the grass on the other side so they would not get crushed under the feet of someone too tall to notice they were there.

I also used to walk through the bushes and trees and watch caterpillars flowing along leaves and branches, their dozens of legs working in unison to move them quickly along. Some were green and spotted, some had spikes on their backs, and others were cinnamon-colored and fuzzy. My favorite caterpillar was the inchworm. I remember the first time I saw the skinny green worm walking along a branch. Instead of rows of legs along the length of its body, it had two sets of feet – front and back – and would lift the front ones, stretch out along the branch, put those feet down again, and move the back set forward, arching its back to gain another inch of slack to enable the next step.

I never touched a mantis. They always scared me a little. Triangular heads with eyes on two corners, and the serrated front legs, bent and ready for prey. They never looked like they were praying, just patiently waiting.

I also noticed things that did not move – at least not on their own. Leaves came in so many shapes and sizes, and different shades of green. But most of them shared a brighter top surface that was held up to the sun by its stem. When the wind blew, the top surface folded up like fingers into the palm of a hand, and the dull, ribbed lower surface would present its furled shape to the breeze that tugged it, but could not quite tear it loose.

As summer progressed, the leaves would change color, their bright shades would seem to dull or brown in the heat of the sun. The days would grow steadily hotter and different animals and birds could be seen. The droning buzz of locusts would start, and my sharp eyes could spot the thin husks of shed skin they would leave behind on the bark of trees.

Some days the heat would build too quickly, and I knew a thunderstorm was coming. So did the animals. The birds would disappear and little insects crawl off to safety or just hide on the underside of leaves.

A few leaves would have fallen by this time, and the first puffs of wind would send them rattling and crackling in circles along the pavement. The wind would grow stronger as the sky darkened to a different kind of night. Rain would start to fall – large drops followed by sheets of rain swept along like laundry flapping on a clothesline. Flashes of jagged lightning would be followed by rumbles and then crashes of thunder. It could sound like the end of the world was coming, but I would stay at the window, watching it all.

Finally the heavier rain would subside, the darkest clouds would move aside, and the sky would lighten with the return of sunshine through thinner clouds. The leaves of distant trees would now show patches of their dull undersides. The strength of the storm winds would tangle them up so bunches of them were no longer able to reach up for the sun. Sometimes when the sun returned a beautiful arch of colors would appear. The highest point seemed miles up, and the ends were so far off you could never see where they touched land, if they ever did. As a child, I learned the scientific explanation for rainbows. That makes them no less awe-inspiring – nor any less of a promise.