

## Millwood

Bigmouth bass.  
That's what he said.  
No bream today. Bigmouth bass.

He seldom spoke on these days.  
My dad and I in a boat.  
A mossy silent day on the lake  
And the murky depths just under the tension  
Held fish.

He brought my cokes and cupcakes  
And his chewing tobacco, Red Man.  
Chocolate and wintergreen mix oddly  
For an eight-year-old.  
But the fish, those slimy fish fit,  
And the clothes, those grimy clothes didn't.

And I loved wearing hats.  
His hats all had bills,  
Foamy fronts, fluorescent writing,  
And cheap plastic netting that filled in the back.  
He let me choose each fishing trip  
A different crown, a quiet routine  
With more gestures than words.

We were silent, mossy, hooded gypsies  
Trolling through every inlet  
With fishing rods for scarves  
And the water our crystal ball.

I heard splashes from fish that had run out of water fleeing from a predator.  
I heard drips from dew that had run out of leaf streaming past stomas to lake.  
I heard groans from Dad who had run out of line casting over reeds and a log.

The day always died suddenly  
With the boat's bow beeline to the ramp.  
Dad would...smile at our small catch.  
We'd bring in the boat,  
Drain the stew of our day from it,  
Load the tackle systematically,  
Crawl into our car  
And head home with small phrases in hand.