


2007

Catails

Nikky Finney

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.uab.edu/pms>

 Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#), and the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Finney, Nikky (2007) "Catails," *PoemMemoirStory*. Vol. 07, Article 33.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.uab.edu/pms/vol07/iss2007/33>

This content has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of the UAB Digital Commons, and is provided as a free open access item. All inquiries regarding this item or the UAB Digital Commons should be directed to the [UAB Libraries Office of Scholarly Communication](#).

CATTAILS

A woman drives across five states just to see her. The other woman has no idea she's headed her way until she's there. She crosses bridges and lakes to get to her door and on the way stops her car along the highway, wades into the soggy ground, cutting down cattails, carrying them to her car as if they are sherbet orange, long stemmed, confederate roses. She drives for two days to get to Kentucky, sleeping in rest areas with her seat lowered all the way back and her doors locked. When she reaches the state line it's drizzling. She calls. *I'm here*, she says. *Who's this?* the other woman asks. The driving woman reminds her of the writing workshop where they shared a love for all things out-of-doors and lyrical. *Come, have lunch with me*, she invites. They eat spinach salads with different kinds of dressing. They talk about driving, the third thing they both love, and how fast the weather can change from state line to state line, something one of them has just been sweet prisoner of. The woman who didn't know she was coming stares at the one who has just arrived as she reads the spinach leaves in her bowl. She marvels at her driving spontaneity. She cannot believe this almost stranger has made it across five states just to have lunch with her. She wonders where she will sleep tonight. The driving woman shows her pictures of her children. Before long their words run out of petrol. The woman who has just finished marveling announces she has to go. The driving woman stands and asks if she will walk her to her car. *I have something for you*. She takes the lead, walking ahead of her while the other woman first lingers then follows. She opens her trunk, filling the waiting woman's arms with the sheared cattails, five feet high, and stolen from across five states. The woman brings their twenty pounds in close, resting them over her rushing heart. Her lungs empty then fill with the scent of damson and fig. For two years, until their velvet bodies begin to fall piece by piece to the floor, every time the

woman in Kentucky passes the bouquet of them there in the vase by the front door, she smells what falling in love without permission smells like. Each time she reaches for her keys she is reminded of what you must be willing to turn into for love: mushroom, cedar, salt marsh, creosote, new bud of pomegranate, blueberry, marigold, leaf fall, frog eye, thief-of-the-night, dusty miller.