**The Gardener**

Stone follows stone along my garden walk

And the bees and the butterflies dance among the flowers

The sunlight plays the foreground, while the shadows hold the scent.

There’s a slight rustle among the ferns, just so slight

That, if I were younger, I would hear, but now

I hold my granddaughter’s hand with a squeeze

And maybe a garter snake slides beneath the leaves

To search for worms by sense of touch and not by sight

She sees a glimpse of tail as it darts

She’s not afraid to part the green to catch a snake.

I’m afraid to part the green, I’m afraid to move anything

With all so perfect as if a paradise

It’s easy to forget what rises from the earth

And bursts in bloom will turn to dust. I pause.

I let go of her hand like a gardener would –

In the first bud of Spring’s first rose, a gardener knows

How things so perfect pass in time

I watch her face in change, as she is so intent

To catch what was a snake, into a smile,

And from a smile, into a laugh,

And I bend down to smell a rose

And watch the light play among the petals

I don’t want to see the faces change any more –

She drops a snail, not a snake, and reaches for my hand, today,

And maybe tomorrow but for tomorrow after that

Who knows – I hold her hand and hope for more.

I know I can’t let the garden grow alone

I must prune and rake and feed and water

And pull the weeds and trim the flowers

And spread manure among the shrubs.

I sweat and burn and grunt and curse

And put this there, and cut on that,

And there are times that I hold back,

I see a flower that I should snip

But its fading shows the beauty among the others

And maybe I should wait a day and let it slowly fade

And then another, and then, I might forget

Until the very end to make the clip.

So today I’ll watch her skip and turn to savor

The moments that close so quickly on forever.

What to some seem a right, I take as chance

And forgetfulness and maybe favor. I remember when I was younger –

I didn’t think my rose would pass

And now I appreciate the flaw among perfection

That I might live today, and then a day, and then another day.