

# CutBank

---

Volume 1  
Issue 23 *CutBank* 23

Article 23

---

Fall 1984

## Turkeys

Donnell Hunter

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

---

### Recommended Citation

Hunter, Donnell (1984) "Turkeys," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 23 , Article 23.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss23/23>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in CutBank by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

## *Turkeys*

It was nice to know we'd soon be rich. "A change is good as a rest," Father said, making plans to bring 200 baby turkeys home. "You don't call them 'baby turkeys.' You're supposed to call them 'poults.'" He showed us in the manual it was true. So we called them poults, told all our friends that meant baby turkeys—we read it in a book. They were impressed.

The feed store man got fifty extra—"just in case some die." Dad agreed: "As long as we've got to be rich, anyway, it can't hurt being rich fifty turkeys more." He moved us from our bedroom, put papers on the floor: "It's just till spring gets warmer. Can't let our assets freeze." We boys slept outside, in a tent, and froze . . . at least it beat sleeping on the parlor floor.

"Kyoke! Kyoke! Kyoke!" The dumb things never learned the sense of silence. In fact they never learned much sense at all except the sense to panic if a mouse ran underneath the roost or an owl said, "Boo!" Then all two hundred six (the feed store man was right, a few did die) would find a different place to hide. Should one concoct some hare-brained notion to fly the coop, they'd all take wing—over the fence, across canals—we had to lift each back, one

by one. We slept outside all summer (in case of thieves), and could hardly wait till harvest when we'd get to cut their bloody throats.

The feed man hadn't said too much of plucking, how the last pin feathers can't be pulled by hand: "Leave one in, it's graded C." It took pliers, petulance, and luck (most of it bad) to get the big job done. We cursed each stubborn wing, blessed the day the cat broke in killing ten, the wind that blew seventeen in the ditch to drown. Had there been a thief we'd have all been glad, knowing come plucking time he'd get his just deserts.

Next year no one objected when one day Dad announced he planned to sell the brooders second hand. "Why don't we just stay poor," said Mother, "we're good at that." "Well alright, if that's what you want, but I met this guy who raises baby pigs, and . . ." She cut him off: "You're supposed to call them swine."

I guess somewhere she read a book.