

Fall 1984

The Death of a Cow

Chard deNiord

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

deNiord, Chard (1984) "The Death of a Cow," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 23 , Article 26.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss23/26>

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.

The Death of a Cow

I had just finished seeing my life again
In the blind of the dangerous curve
When I came upon them.
In yet another unbending rain
That cruel Virginia June,
I was rounding the dangerous curve
On Holcomb Rock when a posse of farmers
In pickups put up their hands to stop us.

It was brown, big, and alive,
Half-submerged in front of the culvert
Through which the normally gentle Judith Creek ran.
I rolled the window down and peered out through
The interference of rain; their bodies
Were forms, almost alien, in the familiar terrain
As they struggled to pass the thick ropes down
To Ed and Jim who then tied them securely
In bowlines around its midsection, a cow.

The waters, rising fast, cut through
Their skin and whirled in panic;
The odds against them were rising fast
As they put their slippery blistered hands
To the task, as though they were saving themselves.
The cow seemed to bring them out to themselves
With her dumb high head lowing away
And the whites of her eyes which mirrored
Her milk and thereby the one clear thread
Of livelihood that ran like a blessing
Through their lives.

Someone said they saw some blood
In the water, although the mud was red
From the clay and mixing quickly in
From the banks. "Probably shot
By some bastard hunter," another said,
Tugging away.

I would have liked to stay
And watch them pull her free
But as the crucial minutes passed
Beyond hope and into a matter of time,
I could already see her dead,
Sunk whole in the swirl.

Now cleared to move along, I did,
I did inside the hum,
The splashing wiping monotone
Of the short leg home.