

Fall 1986

The Eggless Woman

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Recommended Citation

Diemer, Gretchen (1986) "The Eggless Woman," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 27 , Article 27.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss27/27>

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The Eggless Woman

—for Barbara

At the corner of your eye
the red fox still lingers,
waiting for you to make one slip,
leave the gate undone,
and give him a chance
at the hens.

He doesn't know
that on the other side
of this cold gray wire
your life has circled
and closed, the ground
is clear of grain and manure,
and silence is worn
like an old pair of shoes.

You enter the henhouse,
the smell is familiar,
and waking at dawn
an old habit,
like the curve of your hand
around the handle
of your old wicker basket.

You shove the straw from side to side,
collecting bits of broken shell,
placing them carefully in your basket.
Your arm continues to shove at air,
the memory of sharp beaks still painful
as the setting in of age.

The fox, puzzled at the silence,
bends his body towards you,
sinking into the rusted wire.
Practiced in your escape,
you brush by him, your eyes
focused on the dim frame
of the farmhouse door.

Now you sit by the window,
bits of shell scattered
over the table and floor.
Your stare reaches the soft form
at the fence,
a faint red glow
against the darkened fields.

Gretchen Diemer