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The Marsh

Jane Purvey

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JANE PURVEY

THE MARSH

The Marsh was still that night
When first we stood beside its shore.
Above us geese in tardy flight
Fled southward as before
Men came--
And as they will when Mankind is no more.

Dry dying grass upon the bank,
Resolved in mysterious black,
Blended with the shallow lake;
The chill wind bent it back.
I snapped of Autumn
And a stealthy creature's track.

Winter's kiss was in the wind
That stirred the forest circling round
And waked primeval yearnings then
For a familiar human sound.
A hint of snow hung in the air
And frost crept over the ground.

The sky stood deep and eternally old
And the Moon smiled, a fruitful harvest gold.
Stars pricked out of the velvet black

And clouds rolled over and scudded back
To darken the face of the moon.

Her generous light
Warmed the frosty clouds
And tinged their night
With a golden shroud.
The wind blew cold, the Moon peeked out,
And the heavens exploded in a glorious shout.

Serenely over the Marsh she reigned
Trailing ribbons of gold on the face of the lake.
Benevolent warmth tipped the water canes
And a fish broke the blue-black water dank.
Ripples reached out for the jewels of the air
And the brooding lake leapt into flames.

The flesh of our bodies was chilled by the cold,
But the gold of the Moon gleamed into our souls,
And the awe of the night
Left a remnant light
To illumine the rest of our lives.