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## RACHEL ROSE

### Farm Song

The April hills are hung with alder breath.  
Among the evergreens, each bare-limbed mauve  
breath mingles with my mother's breath.

She starts before it's light. She does not rest,  
working to keep pace with those budding groves,  
those April hills all hung with alder breath.

The farm dog follows, nipping at her dress.  
The flatulent cows shift, steaming at the trough.  
Their wet sighs mingle with my mother's breath.

She kicks the top clean off a deer mouse nest.  
The dog whines for the mice cupped in her glove.  
The April hills are smudged with alder breath.

She tosses baby mice into his mouth.  
On two legs he catches them in joyous gulps. His ropes  
of panting slaver mingle with my mother's breath

As both her hands vacate the broken nest.  
Each mouse is blindly swallowed, sacrificed for bulbs.  
Each April hill is hung with this: bereft  
mauve breath, ghosts of pollen, mingled with mother's  
breath.

*Rachel Rose was awarded the 1997 Bronwen Wallace Memorial Prize for fiction. Her work has been published in numerous journals and magazines, including Fireweed, Arc, The Fiddlehead, Calyx, and Contemporary Verse 2. She lives in Montreal.*

## ERINA HARRIS

### excerpt from "the 82 short poems of eliza" (a child born with blue skin)

poem xxxiii

In the light of sickle moon, a woman.  
As she combs her daughter's hair.  
Her fingers find their way  
amongst unruly strands, find their own image  
in shape, in tentative beauty, in the strength  
of the small blue hands  
the same as her own  
only smaller. And blue.

These little hands steal themselves back  
from mama, in the night  
and creep in at dawn to pull from a mother's  
sleeping  
a blue child's dreams.

Elliot decides mama pulls her whole life,  
this way and that  
as mama brushes a blue tangle tame.  
She will ensure that her hair is never combed  
and rarely clean.

The light on mama's face speaks  
to this blue child says  
*who'd have thought ... such a child*  
and ... *to think what becomes of us*  
until the child is no longer here has left her hair  
behind.

Perhaps mama is still speaking to her, still  
stares at the promise:  
tiny fingers stained with the hope of blueberry  
& violet  
as Elliot stares out past the indifference of  
daisies,  
her head bobbing under the brush under the  
influence  
of beauty.

When she doesn't want you to see her  
Elliot just stands out in the fields, in front of the  
sky.  
Watch the blue disappear into the blue in an  
instant.

*Erina Harris is a writing living in Waterloo. Her work has appeared in numerous Canadian journals and magazines.*