

Jonas Laughter
I Knew Kondracki
Poetry

My grandfather took me fishing,
On a lake in the woods.

Fishing was hard to appreciate then.
I couldn't speak, only the fish would hear,
And then they would swim away.
I had to be polite to the lake, had to whisper,
But then my grandfather couldn't hear.
Hours could pass, and I'd only have caught two.
Catching was the part I liked,
"Holding" it in my grandfather's hands.
His gentle bones held the fish
As one would their own brother or sister.
I held it myself, once.
It cut me and swam away.

I never understood why,
We had to sit in silence for hours,
Waiting to catch,
Only to release.
Only to get cut.
I wanted to keep the fish,
To make it worthwhile.
My grandfather said that wasn't the point.
I couldn't see,
What a living fish was worth.
I couldn't see,
Why the fish had to swim away.

I couldn't see:
After he passed,
The light in his shop was always off.
It wasn't what I was looking for,
But my eyes found themselves caught,
Reeled towards dusty rods,
Foundations for spider webs.

With help from the memories,
Of his hands cradling a spider
I released my fears
Into the lake of irrationality.
And that time, the rod fit properly in my hands.

Even then I still couldn't see how to appreciate fishing.
Not until I tried fishing alone.