

Nita Ahola Countryman

Boundaries

Twice this week the bear entered the yard.
It seems he's forgotten
the silent agreement we'd made—
bear, and I.
We'd had an understanding about boundaries,
something like this:

*I'll leave the woods to you, but please—
tiptoe
around the edge of the yard.
Walk behind
the thimbleberries, too.
And let me cut the thistle once a year.*

Now the bear's left his black
calling card in the yard
at the path from the woods:
he's come before dawn
on his return from night-harvesting
the neighbor's plums.

The birdseed and breadcrumbs
I've scattered for the wrens and towhee
make a paltry snack for a bruin.
Big baby.
But it seems he wants
to renegotiate our agreement.