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As I Look to the Sky, Maize

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As I Look to the Sky, Maize

Second, the wind in the corn
calls me as a mother cat
to her kit, first as a man --
whispers of unexpected
whispers form
on the broad leaves,
fall onto my skin,
caress my body on a long
walk, crisscrossing paths
left by teens in jeeps,
joyriding in the field of ears,
creating noises not meant
for mounds of earth
and fish and seed planted
in spring, now taller
than a man in the
heat of late July.
Tassels of silk toss
in the breeze, smelling
of corn mush, cakes
and corn whiskey that
Grandma held in her
hands back in Ohio.
I remember the husk
doll she gave me
at five, oatmeal color
and dry enough to burst
into friendly flame
which once had heated the
blackened fields,
then furry with
green seedlings.
The corn-silk hair
of the doll fell out
as I grew older and
Grandma fed me
Succotash, mixing
her vegetables from
the garden behind the

white-sided house,
trying to recapture
the look of West Virginia.
I buried that doll with
Grandma, placed
a leaf and tassel in
her cold hands. We
planted her in the
hills of West Virginia,
waiting for spring
and the growth of Easter.

I pull a stalk
and rip. Yellow
teeth, milk-rich,
splatter my face with
sweet, cloudy liquid,
as I stand with
Matt in a cornfield
in Ohio, summer
before college. We
have been driving,
stop to breathe the rows.
We find a farmer,
blue-jeaned and working
his field, checking for
pests. He asks what
we are up to,
we explain our
love of corn and water
and the Ohio summer.
We wonder if he can
see love in our
hands as they join
together in flesh;
the other hands
gripping branches of
the abundant corn.
He must, for he
invites us to use
his field again.
The wind blows Matt's

messed hair, the color
of the silk on that
cornhusk doll.
We use his field again,
making love under the
moon, hiding among
the corn as we lie looking
up at the moon
through the moving leaves.

As I near the
edge of the
scarred field,
I remember yet
another time —
the wind blowing down
fifteen acres of a patch,
full-grown stalks against
the storm, a circular
pattern appearing where
corn had extended
to the sky.

That was the summer
you left for school
in the East, I for a
school in Ohio. As I
leave this field now
at the horizon, I wonder
about the rain, cooling
the scorched soil,
what sort of harvest
this year will bring.

Shannon Salsler