

# The Withered Hand of August

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Ron Pronk

The withered hand of August  
is gripping my throat. Desert air  
scavenges the city.  
This day is too long.

Pete Soileau, Don Winkleman, I can hardly see  
your faces in the light. I wonder if  
you ever recall what I  
cannot forget—  
how elastic and green a twelve year old world appears;  
how our naked torpedo bodies loved to startle  
the still river; how it felt  
to knead the thick clay bank  
between our toes.

At night, when the alley dogs bay  
the hand loosens  
the air hums emptiness  
and I breathe too deeply.

I see what stirs the dogs and draws them  
to darkness; something  
like the heat of this withered hand  
gripping with things that have passed  
untouched.