

## Summer Dam

*Judy Curtis*

After spring snowmelt from Ephraim Canyon  
where Grandpa ran his eighty head in summer,  
the creek slowed and eased its crippled way  
down over gravel and stones,  
through corrals, past remnants of outhouses  
and vegetable gardens  
into the swampy fields west of town,  
dry now in July and blanketed with a gauzy algal husk.

We were not supposed to play in that water  
where it flowed under the wood plank bridge  
downstream from the grazing cattle  
and didn't mean to until summer heat drove us  
to squat at the edge—  
just to poke at water striders with a stick . . .

But when cool drops splashed our arms  
shoes came off, pants rolled up  
and we hefted, pushed, and wedged  
the rocks to block the flow and make a pool  
to satisfy our water lust; then,  
leopard-spotted with mud  
we hoped would disappear with the wetness,  
we headed for the barn to hide and dry.

The phone rang in the old house  
without moving the dead afternoon air.  
A neighbor from downstream:

*Where's my water?*

We heard the slam of the screen door,  
the stomp of Grandpa's boots,  
an explosion of cursings.  
Peering out between shrunken gray slats  
we saw the horses sinking with each step  
into the murky, shallow sea our rocks had made.  
Grandpa waded in, raging,  
flinging his arms as he kicked the dam loose,  
stumbling and falling from the force of freed water  
while we gaped in terrified awe  
at the prospect of our own power.