

## Parable

At first I planned to make friends  
along the road, but each time  
I reached out to take a hand  
it retreated into the shadows.

I did, however, meet a gull by the shore  
who felt pity because I had never  
learned how to fly, explained the difference  
between human beings and gulls:  
There is no need to teach  
a gull how to catch a fish.

And I met a turtle who nibbled at my toes  
as I swam in the lake, then explained  
the difference between human beings and turtles:  
Human beings will never really know  
what it is like to just relax  
in the cool mud at lake-bottom.

And I met an ant who invited me  
into her hill to tour all of its chambers  
and secret passageways, told me  
I would discover there the difference  
between human beings and ants.  
But I said that probably I already understood.

And so I returned home feeling contented.  
Still, after a while, as human beings  
tend to do, I came to miss my new friends,  
decided to set out on the road again.

But this time when I reached the sea  
I learned that the gull had moved away,  
closer to the landfill where  
she spends her time, these days,  
scavenging among the left-overs.

And when I got to the lake, I saw  
that its bottom was baked dry,  
all of the water diverted to nourish  
lawns and swimming pools.

And when I arrived at the field  
where the ant hill had been  
I saw a parking lot filled with people,  
no longer hiding in the shadows  
but scurrying from car to mall,  
then back again, arms filled with packages.

This time, when I held out my hand  
they simply looked at me as if  
I were from some other planet, and

I was unable to find anyone  
who was interested in nibbling my toes.

Steve Bloom  
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