

# Simply Caring

---

**Lisa Kemmerer**

## **Being There**

The neighbors thought their children  
should witness birth,  
but Missy picked our house  
for birthing,  
nursing,  
weaning,  
  
aging.

Abundant years  
and I somehow felt Missy  
as forever,  
until I found myself  
whispering into wispy fur,  
watching mottled eyes mist  
and glaze to gone.

I wonder,  
why such ballyhoo  
over birth  
and yet so little interest  
in the commitment of caring  
that lasts across a lifetime,  
complete with being there  
to speak softly  
as spirits grapple  
with their going?

## Sharing Space

I watched you scoot a scurrying spider  
onto a scrap of paper,  
into your protective palm,  
then across the hallway  
to rehome her  
under the protective cover  
of our colorful kitchen curtains.

You sheltered that bundle of being  
as we might once have tended  
tender Bramble Cay melomys,  
grazing quaggas,  
trusting dodos,  
gentle thylacines,  
sleek Baiji dolphins,  
gregarious passenger pigeons,  
solitary black rhinos,  
prehistoric Yangtze sturgeons,  
eloquent dusky sparrows—  
whom we now find to be  
  
missing.

## Swaggering Salamander

Dressed in colors of caution,  
     a tiger salamander  
 surged over the rough roadway  
     with such certainty—  
 tacky toes pushing pavement  
     with tail-powered torque,  
     wrinkling with each wiggly weave.

I hastened to hoist that fine amphibian,  
     holding her between tentative tips  
 while her rubbery limbs  
     perpetually paddled.  
 She looked back at me  
     with shiny brown spheres  
     that bulged like May buds—  
 lenses located for wary-watch  
     when submerged  
     (with legs lax and  
     long tail trailing).

I took her to the perimeter  
     of a picturesque pond  
 and tucked that tiny traveler  
     under a fallen leaf  
     for careful keeping,  
 all the while pondering  
     what her peepers might perceive  
     and why our paths had crossed.

In time—  
     given how busy she was with being,  
     and the wrongness of roads  
     (*and of so much more*)—  
 I came to see that I was there  
     only for her.