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Poem of the Dump Sticker Salesman

[Keith Althaus](#)

In a corner of the shack overnight
a spider has caught a wasp in its web
and has begun devouring it.
What becomes of the poison?
This morning townspeople come and go
buying their dump permits,
and in between I read your second book,
not rushed, but not as rich
as the first: lists of plants
and flowers, and anonymous winds
have replaced people and their breath.
An easy voice has taken over
and left the hard things unsaid.
Later on, when it gets really quiet
I work on my own book, finished
many times, my second, third,
all unpublished, careful to put
them away when a customer comes,
then picking up again where I
left off, mid-poem, mid-career,
in a booth in a parking lot
selling dump stickers, surrounded
by the August traffic,
I keep going,
looking for the heart,
mindful of the poison.

"Poem of the Dump Sticker Salesman" is from *Rival Heavens* by Keith Althaus (Provincetown Arts Press).
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