

Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal

Volume 6 | Issue 2

Article 4

January 2007

How You Are Going to Save the World

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Recommended Citation

Lotze, Cynthia Grier (2007) "How You Are Going to Save the World," *Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal*: Vol. 6: Iss. 2, Article 4.

Available at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/harpurpalate/vol6/iss2/4>

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Lotze: How You Are Going to Save the World

MILTON KESSLER MEMORIAL PRIZE

FINALIST

HOW YOU ARE GOING TO SAVE THE WORLD

Cynthia Grier Lotze

In the interest of all the things
that are drying up, I submit
for your immediate use: receding
lakes, rivers running to nothing
but the final sweat of rocks, the family
Holstein in bones
and a slack cow-coat and, finally,
your uncapped pen, oxidizing
ink in the elements. Things are nearly
spent with your idling, and last week
you stood too near a whole, dead
fish under glass in the deli
and a man looked at the pair
of you, you and the fish; he was
thinking you might be dead, too. Wide,
dead trout eyes. *Help! I can't
blink*, you thought. *It's all drying up!*
Is this what the fish thought? As he was
plucked from his puddle to set out
flaking in a desert of beached
seafood? But here's some
news: It's not too late. For you,
for the cow (perhaps it is
for the fish), the river, the lakes, the man
(who found himself wondering if
he noticed you entirely because he felt
like the fish, too) and, finally, the smooth,
cool, gorgeous barrel of your abandoned
pen. The wild, arid world

will spring to flooding under
your kind hand. The rocks will
weep and the cows will leap the pasture
fence toward the sea, grow
fins and teach the fish
civil disobedience. All this because
of you, the scratch of your pen again quietly
sounding the clean, wet rasp of invention. Now
is the tenth hour at least. Were it the eleventh,
I wouldn't bother to say.