



Jo McDougall

Distinguished Kansas Poet

• [E-mail](#)

Jo McDougall is the author of five books of poetry: *Satisfied with Havoc*, *Dirt*, *Towns Facing Railroads*, *From Darkening Porches*, and *The Woman in the Next Booth*.

Among her awards are a DeWitt Wallace/Reader's Digest Writing award, Academy of American Poets award, and Arkansas's Porter Prize.

Her work was produced by the Arkansas Repertory Theatre in the spring of 2006 and has been adapted for a film, Emerson County Shaping Dream.

Her poems appear in Garrison Keillor's *Good Poems for Hard Times*, Ted Kooser's *American Life in Poetry*, and such journals as the *Hudson Review*, *Georgia Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, and *New Letters*.

Spring Comes To Leawood, Kansas

I'm walking down Wenonga Street,
savoring tulips,
wondering at a yellow chair
in front of an open window.
A concrete lion stalks
a bed of daffodils.
Someone has given him red nails
and purple eyes.
A sign, *Father and Sons Home Painting*
glimmers on a lawn,
proclaiming the stick figures
of Dad and David and Don.

From a block away,
the sounds of hammering.

A Great Plains Farmer Beseeches The Lord For Rain

We've come a long way from you, Lord,
a fact most of us acknowledge.
Sinners, all, but we do suffer.
The few trees left are shriven.
The ground divides and shifts,
a peril to dogs and children
and cattle worse off than Job's.
Everywhere about us commandments break.

Elmer Brantlee's wheat dried up;
rumor has it the bank will foreclose.
I warrant it doesn't matter much
in the scheme of things. The radio
says rain, but who can believe?

I owe the bank more than I'll let on.
The wife, she's taken to smiling less:
there's no money now for those things she craves.

And there is this minor thing
a rain might ease:
she sleeps—because of the heat, she claims—
as far from me in bed as ever she can.

So, Lord,...if I am just, and if you please.

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Everything You Wanted

It sits beside a hill north of a town
named Miner's Grove or Franklin,
a farmhouse like any other in Kansas:
two-storied, white, bleak under four trees.
Behind it a windmill, a barn, a shed.
In the barn, the flaring smell of dung.
Room by room
sunlight blooms in the house,
polishes each table like a wife.
Here is everything
you wanted.

Someone enters from stage left,
a husband maybe, or the oldest son
to hang himself in the cloudy breath of the milking shed.

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The Dress

Well, I'm her mother and I cannot see it,
that kind of money for one more thing to wear
to the Frostee-Freez. I guess I might have done
the same thing at her age but, hell, at her age
I was married and lived in the mining camp
raising two kids, the baby being her.
She put on the dress last night, a strapless thing,
slipping up from the bottom and down at the top.
She called Harold, the weenie boyfriend,
to come take her down to the Idle Hour.
Waiting, she crossed her legs and fluffed her hair.
I'll bet she wasn't dreaming of pukey babies
or a man who rolls away soon as he's done,
or once of herself, married willy-nilly,
tomtit for a husband and no money.
It costs what she makes in a week, but she's got to have it.

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