

# THE GARDEN

*Jim Barton*

When first I awoke and found you,  
by my side in the early eve,  
I gazed at the garden around us  
and vowed I would never leave;  
jasmine and Virginia creeper  
rustled in the freshening breeze,  
bracken ferns and mosses  
tickled the feet of the trees.

Soon we fell into a rhythm,  
a pattern in this patternless place;  
you tried to tame it, I vowed to name it,  
together, but at our own pace.  
We're at home in this hardscrabble Eden,  
where the earth fits the palms of our hands;  
where every night is filled with the light  
of starseeds on angels' lands.

We have not a single serpent  
to offer forbidden fruit,  
but many there are who would bite our heels  
from a crevice or hidden root.  
And once, while picking berries,  
I expressed my innermost thought  
to a snake whose eyes saw the same juicy prize—  
we both failed to gain what we sought.

This Paradise growing around us  
will outlast us to be sure;  
the bruises will heal, the cuts will seal,  
and the garden will surely endure.  
Then, when I am forced to leave it,  
I'll wait 'til the Angel-guards sleep,  
and soft as the fall of a butterfly's shawl,  
back through those gates I'll creep

to taste the sweet huckleberries;  
to drink of the daffodils' dew;  
to walk through our hardscrabble Eden  
forever in love with you.

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