

It Was Morning

Bella was a Holstein-Guernsey cross
who at milking time,
with her udder bulging like a blown-up balloon,
would walk into the stall
without direction or encouragement
to munch alfalfa
and wait for me to sit
on my one-legged wood stool
with my forehead resting on her side
and my hands with warm water
washing her swollen teats.

Squeeze and pull, squeeze and pull,
two-hundred times or so,
slowly filling the four-gallon pail
propped between my legs.
I still smell her warm milk
and see its steam in the chill
like the spirit of life
I breathe in.

By Arlin Buyert