

## Four Poems · *Pattiann Rogers*

### THE SENSE GOD GAVE

enough to forage successfully for grains  
and grass sprouts in the protected shallows  
of coastal marshes, to fatten further  
on Yukon berries for a month in the fall

enough to thrust the head forward hissing,  
raise the feathers and run full force  
at weasels near the breeding grounds, to hold  
the wings slightly from the body in an icy  
rain to shelter the young

sufficient to be reliable sentries  
in the courtyards of Egyptians, Romans  
and Greeks, to pull the toy, flower-filled  
wooden carts of Christian children  
at Easter time, to be favorite  
family caretaker of cradle songs,  
to be roused on a hillside  
and scattered forever  
by John Whiteside's daughter

enough to nest on the wide nest  
of the Arctic tundra, to be as gregarious  
as the waves on northern summer bays,  
to be flocks of sterling in the moonlight,  
the color of fog in fog, to assume  
the aura of ancient river flyways,  
to assume the name  
of snow

enough to be and perfectly to be  
(even as any saint or angel must)  
the full, proliferating,  
and ever-multifarious proof  
of exactly that measure given

### ON BEING EATEN ALIVE

You know the most terrifying ways—giant fish,  
reticulate python, saber-toothed cat,  
army ants by the hundreds, piranha  
by the scores. One can imagine  
being scarlet in the blood  
of a lion or rolled as pellets  
in a wolf's belly or ossified  
in the barrelled bones  
of a grizzly bear.

There are those who have been snatched  
away without leaving a trace  
into the flames (efficient bowels)  
of a pine forest on fire or a burning  
barn in August and those  
who have been taken on rough tongues  
of salt, smothered and lost  
in a cavern full of sea.

I have seen others disappear  
without a cry, wholly ingested,  
limbs and hair and voice,  
swallowed up irretrievably  
by the expanding sac  
of insanity.