

## Three Poems · *Jane Kenyon*

### ICE OUT

As late as yesterday ice preoccupied  
the pond—dark, half melted, water-logged.  
Then it sank in the night, one piece,  
taking winter with it. And afterward  
everything seems simple and good.

All afternoon I lifted oak leaves  
from the flowerbeds, and greeted  
like friends the green-white crowns  
of perennials. They have the tender,  
unnerving beauty of a baby's head.

How I hated to come in! I've left  
the windows open to hear the peepers'  
wildly disproportionate cries.  
Dinner is over, no one stirs. The dog  
sighs, sneezes, and closes his eyes.

### CULTURAL EXCHANGE

A postcard arrives from a friend  
visiting the Great Wall of China.  
"Life couldn't be better," says M.

I was there once, in March. Unkind wind  
bore down from the north. Mongolia . . .  
How steep it is! In places even presidents  
are forced to drop down on all fours.

On the way back to Beijing  
our embassy car rushed wildly  
through a succession of hamlets, forcing  
bicycles off the road, dooryard  
fowl to flap and fluster, and from  
grandmother, bundled in her blue jacket  
to take the pale sun, such a look!

Tired? Tired was not the word.  
Getting sleepy in the warm car  
I considered the Wall, the scale  
of enterprise. A lock of hair had fallen  
across my eyes. At last my brain  
convinced my hand to move it.

That night I was honored by a banquet  
in a room so cold I could see my breath.

### A BOY GOES INTO THE WORLD

My brother rode off on his bike  
into the summer afternoon, but  
mother called me back  
from the end of the drive:  
“It’s different for girls.”  
How that stung!

He’d be gone for hours, come back  
with things: a cocoon, gray-brown  
and papery around a stick;  
a puff ball, ripe, wrinkled,  
and exuding spores; owl pellets—  
bits of undigested bone and fur;  
and pieces of moss that might  
have made toupees for preposterous  
green men, but went instead  
into a wide-necked jar for a terrarium.