

Plowing Before Sunset

by Brigid Amos

The boy wondered if anyone had ever had an arm ripped off by a plow.

He gripped the handles tighter to keep the wildly lurching farm implement from getting away from him.

The soil was particularly cloddy this year

due to a wet winter

followed by a scorching, nearly rainless summer.

Each time the iron share hit a really big clod lying on the surface,

the plow was catapulted into the air,

yanking mercilessly on his skinny, sore arms.

The boy called "whoa" to the mules and rubbed his shoulders.

In school, he had learned about ligaments,

bits of stuff that was like twine

that held the bones together at the joint.

These ligaments could break under enough stress.

He wondered whether or not it meant that the arm would fall off.

As he finished his evening chores,

he became aware of how quickly the late summer day was ending.

The sun squeezed out its last few rays of light and scattered them frugally across the land.

Finally exhausted, it dipped behind the prairie,

leaving him to plow by the light of its meager leavings.

The two mules were beyond delirium, and when the light had all but faded,

they decided, as a team,

that it was time to stop.

The boy seemed to agree, for he finished the furrow

and drove the mules to the barn.