

## Category 24, A Poem With A Point Of View: 1st place

### *Poet's note:*

This prose poem is a braid of landscapes, experiences and speech fragments gathered near my home base in the Rockfish River Valley. I've known a few people, one a child who had just learned the meaning of the word "actually," who liked to provide a more accurate version of the topic at hand by saying "actually," as in "Actually, that's called a Red Eft." Often our stories about what's "actual" can't quite settle down; there's never just one version of what happened, or is happening, even when people experience the same events together. So in a way it's a poem about version control. What story do we tell about our planet and what story will our children tell?

## The Story, Actually

Driving at dusk we saw a blue-washed wall fringed with purple. Actually, you said, almost teal. Later I dressed myself in rain fringed with honeysuckle. Actually, it was gratitude for vanilla and bourbon. The infection lurks in the spine and erupts sporadically. Actually, spirochetes locate an interstellar space near Cassiopeia, emerging when gluons are scarce. The AIDS of the woods – when did walking become a fraught activity? Clouds dripped into a bamboo bucket of foam flower and cress, so we plunged our hands in deep. Actually, Pilot Mountain sang to us with its worm-eating warbler while the clouds attenuated overhead. Whenever I start my story for dinner guests, you interrupt with more lurid details. Actually, jewelweed, or touch-me-not, blooms across the table runner, around the wineglasses, until seeds spring out at the gentlest touch leaving behind curlicue pods like crumpled parachutes. Down in spotted foxglove throats anguish is vibrated by bees. Actually, their colonies collapse while we go to big box stores for cases of cat food. Actually, it all adds up to ways to say I love you to ecosystems quite possibly beyond repair.

Amelia L. Williams