

Failed Harvest (to other grayed men who wear trousers)
by Brian Kokensparger

The pole beans, yellow and swollen,
weep cold trails on my hand
as I release them to their brown
tethers. Others, shriveled and dried,
kiss the fence, teased by autumn's soft
breath. The habaneras, thought
barren in August, produced two fruits
in October; they have just emerged
to suffer the first deep frost; plastic
vessels now rocking empty cradles
towards winter. The lima bean pods
explode at touch, throwing hard white
seeds into my path.

I think back
to harvest time, to days lost in a city
hot and sired and full of machines,
of buttons, winking. Well oiled, I slept
little and loved less.

Now my harvest
rebels, torturing me with reminiscences
of beans in sun-supple pods, and the odor
of life's seed when the pot boils over.