

What the Lizard Knows

My cat catches mice and lizards
in the brush behind my house.
She carries them in her mouth
across the patio, to the back door,
then lies beside them
looking the other way.
A mouse will hunker motionless
for some instinctive interval,
then try to dart away.
I doubt any have survived.

Lizards are different.
One lizard the cat brought home,
one that was now tailless,
turned and faced my cat—
less than a foot away
and a hundred times its size—
and spread its jaws wide open
in what must be a fearsome display
to ladybugs and gnats.
A lizard must know
that the part of it that's easiest
for others to grab onto, to break off,
is the easiest part to let go of,
and, in time, renew.

When I cower before things half my size—
cold words,
broken promises,
treacherous smiles—
It is because I have forgotten
what even the lizard knows.

Larry Colker

Larry Colker has co-hosted the weekly Redondo Poets reading in Redondo Beach, CA, for many years. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Los Angeles Review*, *The Cortland Review*, *RATTLE*, *Spillway*, *Solo* and other journals in print and on the Web, and in anthologies from Tebot Bach, Valley Contemporary Poets and Arroyo Arts Collective. His latest collection is titled *What the Lizard Knows: New and Selected Poems*. Larry is a technical writer by trade and lives in San Pedro, CA.

