No Harpoons, Unless . . .

Arnold H. Webster
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"Twas a question for a barefoot boy:
Was it better to walk that half-mile
to the mail box
(down by the country school)
on the warm, dusty road --
or in the grassy ditch?

In spite of thorny prairie roses
and a few thistles,
the ditch held fascination.
There were, for instance,
several secret spots
of blue-eyed grass
only a very few special people would ever see.
There were "Butter'n Eggs"
to brighten patches here and there.
Later in the season, HARPOONS!

That graceful grass stood out from other prairie partners.
It bowed its shining sheaths,
inviting me to gather a handful
of brown harpoons for practicing my skill at playfully spearing my unsuspecting friends.

The seeds slipped easily from the glistening sheaths.
The incredible "tail" fastened to the brown, barbed, and pointed seed made a perfectly balanced harpoon that would stick tightly to cloth of shirt or jacket or overalls.

Sometimes the "tails" were twisted, and not good for throwing.
Grown ups liked them better that way.
They said the tail was a good indicator of humidity when it twisted up into a corkscrew.
They also said that the twisting, and the very pointed seed, enabled the harpoons to spiral their way into the loose soil of gopher mounds.

How I wish I could walk that ditch again, and look closely at all the kinds of grasses and prairie flowers that flourished then.
They're gone now.
There are no barefoot boys to marvel at harpoons; no boys or girls who share blue-eyed grass secrets.

When I'm gone, even the memories of those prairie-filled ditches will have vanished.

The mystery of prairie plants whose varied numbers grew in synchronous harmony, will never be talked about -- much less lived with and loved.

Unless . . .

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